

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

EDITED FOR
THE UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS
BY
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BASEL MISSION PRESS, CANARAG LTD., MANGALORE S. K.

1938

PREFACE

The following Selections in English Poetry have been compiled for use primarily in the Intermediate Classes of this University, in which an attempt is made to introduce the candidates to, and interest them in, some of the greater English authors in poetry, prose and drama. The Selections include poems, both lyrical and narrative, and cover a wide field, beginning with the 16th century and coming down to the present day. Although the Intermediate candidates are expected to study no more than a thousand lines of poetry prescribed from year to year, it is hoped the present volume will tempt them to stray out of these narrow bounds and read and enjoy the whole book, thus laying the foundations for a genuine appreciation of English Poetry and the formation of a good style. "In nothing is England so great as in her poetry", and the modern copyright poems included in the latter half of this book should convince the young student that the long and glorious tradition is still vigorous and active.

Thanks are due, and are here rendered, for permission to include copyright poems, to the following authors, publishers and holders of the copyright:

Mrs. Thomas Hardy for "The Darkling Thrush"
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Messrs. Chatto and Windus for Wilfrid Owen's
"Strange Meeting";

Lady Desborough and "The Times", London, for
"Into Battle" by Julian Grenfell;

V. Sackville West for her poem "Mirage";

Messrs. Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd. for
Flecker's "Golden Journey" and "Brumana";

PREFACE

- Mr. Laurence Binyon for "Asoka";
Mr. Hilaire Belloc and Messrs. Duckworth for
"The South Country";
Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson for R. Brooke's
"The Great Lover"; and Edmund Blunden's
"Almswomen";
Messrs. Pearn, Pollinger and Higham Ltd., for
the two poems of D. H. Laurence, "Snake"
and "Man and Bat";
Mr. W. B. Yeats and A. P. Watt & Son and
Messrs. Macmillan for "The Lake Isle of
Innisfree" and the "Rose of the World";
Walter De La Mare and Messrs. James B. Pinker &
Son for the poems included;
Mr. Edward Shanks and Messrs. Macmillan for
"The Swimmers";
Mrs. Freeman and Messrs. Macmillan for "The
Chair" by John Freeman;
Mr. Rudyard Kipling, Messrs. A. P. Watt & Son
and Messrs. Methuen for Kipling's "Sussex"
from the "Five Nations";
Mrs. Sylvia Lynd for "The Return of the Gold-
finches".

The two poems of John Masefield have been reprinted
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"There is a Hill Beside the Silver Thames" and
"Elegy on a Dead Child" are from the *Shorter Poems*
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EDITOR.

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SIR EDWARD DYER

MY MIND TO ME A KINGDOM IS

My mind to me a kingdom is
Such present joys therein I find,
That it excels all other bliss
That earth affords or grows by kind.
Though much I want which most would have, 5
Yet still my mind forbids to crave.

No princely pomp, no wealthy store,
No force to win the victory,
No wily wit to salve a sore, **CHECKED 2003**
No shape to feed a loving eye; 10
To none of these I yield as thrall
For why my mind doth serve for all.

I see how plenty suffers oft,
And hasty climbers soon do fall;
I see that those which are aloft 15
Mishap doth threaten most of all;
They get with toil, they keep with fear:
Such cares my mind could never bear.

Content I live, this is my stay,
I seek no more than may suffice; 20
I press to bear no haughty sway;
Look, what I lack my mind supplies.
Lo! thus I triumph like a king,
Content with that my mind doth bring.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Some have too much, yet still do crave; 25

I little have and seek no more.

They are but poor, though much they have,

And I am rich with little store.

They poor, I rich; they beg, I give;

They lack, I leave; they pine, I live. 30

I laugh not at another's loss;

I grudge not at another's gain;

No worldly waves my mind can toss;

My state at one doth still remain.

I fear no foe, I fawn no friend; 35

I loathe not life, nor dread my end.

Some weigh their pleasure by their lust,

Their wisdom by their rage of will;

Their treasure is their only trust,

A cloaked craft their store of skill: 40

But all the pleasure that I find

Is to maintain a quiet mind.

My wealth is health and perfect ease,

My conscience clear my choice defence;

I neither seek by bribes to please,

Nor by deceit to breed offence. 45

Thus do I live; thus will I die;

Would all did so as well as I!

SAMUEL DANIEL

ULYSSES AND THE SIREN

- Siren.** **C**OME worthy Greek ! Ulysses, come ;
Possess these shores with me !
The winds and seas are troublesome,
And here we may be free.
Here may we sit and view their toil 5
That travail in the deep,
And joy the day in mirth the while
And spend the night in sleep.
- Ulysses.** Fair nymph, if fame, or honour were
To be attained with ease 10
Then would I come, and rest me there,
And leave such toils as these.
But here it dwells, and here must I
With danger seek it forth,
To spend the time luxuriously 15
Becomes not men of worth.
- Siren.** Ulysses, O ! be not deceived
With that unreal name :
This honour is a thing conceived,
And rests on other's fame. 20
Begotten only to molest
Our peace, and to beguile
The best thing of our life, our rest,
And give us up to toil.
- Ulysses.** Delicious nymph, suppose there were 25
Nor honour, nor report,
Yet manliness would scorn to wear
The time in idle sport.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

For toil doth give a better touch,
 To make us feel our joy;
 And ease finds tediousness as much
 As labour yields annoy. 30

Siren. Then pleasure likewise seems the shore,
 Whereto tends all your toil,
 Which you forgo to make it more, 35
 And perish oft the while.
 Who may disport them diversely
 Find never tedious day,
 And ease may have variety,
 As well as action may. 40

Ulysses. But natures of the noblest frame
 These toils and dangers please,
 And they take comfort in the same,
 As much as you in ease;
 And with the thought of actions past 45
 Are recreated still;
 When pleasure leaves a touch at last,
 To shew that it was ill.

Siren. That doth opinion only cause,
 That's out of custom bred, 50
 Which makes us many other laws,
 Than ever Nature did.
 No widows wail for our delights,
 Our sports are without blood;
 The world we see by warlike wights 55
 Receives more hurt than good.

Ulysses. But yet the state of things require
 These motions of unrest,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

And these great Spirits of high desire
 Seem born to turn them best; 60
 To purge the mischiefs that increase,
 And all good order mar,
 For oft we see a wicked peace
 To be well changed for war.

Siren. Well, well, Ulysses, then I see, 65
 I shall not have thee here;
 And therefore I will come to thee,
 And take my fortunes there.
 I must be won that cannot win,
 Yet lost were I not won, 70
 For beauty hath created been,
 T' undo, or be undone.

ROBERT HERRICK

TO DAFFODILS

FAIR daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attained his noon.

5

Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the evensong;
And, having prayed together, we
Will go with you along.

10

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or anything.

15

We die,
As your hours do, and dry
Away,
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew
Ne'er to be found again.

20

CORINNA'S GOING A-MAYING

GET up, get up for shame, the blooming morn
Upon her wings presents the god unshorn.
See how Aurora throws her fair
Fresh-quilted colours through the air :
Get up, sweet slug-a-bed, and see 5
The dew bespangling herb and tree.
Each flower has wept, and bowed toward the east,
Above an hour since : yet you not dress'd ;
Nay ! not so much as out of bed ?
When all the birds have matins said 10
And sung their thankful hymns, 'tis sin,
Nay, profanation, to keep in,
Whereas a thousand virgins on this day
Spring sooner than the lark, to fetch in May.

Rise and put on your foliage, and be seen 15
To come forth, like the spring-time, fresh and green,
And sweet as Flora. Take no care
For jewels for your gown or hair :
Fear not ; the leaves will stréw
Gems in abundance upon you : 20
Besides, the childhood of the day has kept,
Against you come, some orient pearls unwept.
Come, and receive them while the light
Hangs on the dew-locks of the night :
And Titan on the eastern hill 25
Retires himself, or else stands still
Till you come forth ! Wash, dress, be brief in praying :
Few beads are best when once we go a-Maying.

Come, my Corinna, come ; and coming, mark
How each field turns a street, each street a park, 30

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

- Made green and trimmed with trees : see how
 Devotion gives each house a bough
 Or branch : each porch, each door, ere this,
 An ark, a tabernacle is,
 Made up of white-thorn neatly interwove, 35
 As if here were those cooler shades of love.
 Can such delights be in the street
 And open fields, and we not see't ?
 Come, we'll abroad : and let's obey
 The proclamation made for May : 40
 And sin no more, as we have done, by staying ;
 But, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying.
- There's not a budding boy or girl this day
 But is got up, and gone to bring in May.
 A deal of youth, ere this, is come 45
 Back, and with white-thorn laden home.
 Some have despatched their cakes and cream,
 Before that we have left to dream :
 And some have wept and wooed, and plighted troth,
 And chose their priest, ere we can cast off sloth : 50
 Many a green-gown has been given ;
 Many a kiss, both odd and even :
 Many a glance, too, has been sent
 From out the eye, love's firmament ;
 Many a jest told of the keys betraying 55
 This night, and locks pick'd, yet we're not a-Maying.
- Come, let us go, while we are in prime ;
 And take the harmless folly of the time.
 We shall grow old apace, and die 60
 Before we know our liberty.
 Our life is short, and our days run
 As fast away as does the sun.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

And, as a vapour or a drop of rain,
Once lost, can ne'er be found again,
 So when or you or I are made
 A fable, song, or fleeting shade,
 All love, all liking, all delight
 Lies drowned with us in endless night.
Then, while time serves, and we are but dec
Come, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying.

65
70

ANDREW MARVELL

THOUGHTS IN A GARDEN

How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oak, or bays;
And their uncessant labours see
Crowned from some single herb or tree.
Whose short and narrow-vergéd shade
Does prudently their toils upbraid;
While all flowers and all trees do close
To weave the garlands of repose.

5

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence thy sister dear!
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busy companies of men.
Your sacred plants, if here below,
Only among the plants will grow.
Society is all but rude,
To this delicious solitude.

10

15

No white nor red was ever seen
So am'rous as this lovely green.
Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,
Cut in these trees their mistress' name.
Little, alas, they know, or heed,
How far these beauties hers exceed!
Fair trees! wheresoe'er your barks I wound,
No name shall but your own be found.

20

When we have run our passion's heat,
Love hither makes his best retreat.

25

The gods, that mortal beauty chase,
 Still in a tree did end their race.
 Apollo hunted Daphne so,
 Only that she might laurel grow. 30
 And Pan did after Syrinx speed,
 Not as a nymph, but for a reed.

What wondrous life in this I lead !
 Ripe apples drop about my head ;
 The luscious clusters of the vine 35
 Upon my mouth do crush their wine ;
 The nectarine, and curious peach,
 Into my hands themselves do reach ;
 Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
 Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass. 40

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
 Withdraws into its happiness :
 The mind, that ocean where each kind
 Does straight its own resemblance find ;
 Yet it creates, transcending these, 45
 Far other worlds, and other seas ;
 Annihilating all that's made
 To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
 Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root, 50
 Casting the body's vest aside,
 My soul into the boughs does glide :
 There like a bird it sits and sings,
 Then whets, and combs its silver wings ;
 And, till prepared for longer flight, 55
 Waves in its plumes the various light.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Such was that happy garden-state
While man there walked without a mate :
After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could yet be meet ! 60
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share
To wander solitary there :
Two paradises 'twere in one
To live in Paradise alone.

How well the skilful gardener drew 65
Of flowers and herbs this dial new ;
Where from above the milder sun
Does through a fragrant zodiac run ;
And, as it works, th' industrious bee
Computes its time as well as we. 70
How could such sweet and wholesome hours
Be reckoned but with herbs and flowers !

AN HORATIAN ODE UPON CROMWELL'S RETURN FROM IRELAND

THE forward youth that would appear
Must now forsake his Muses dear,
Nor in the shadows sing
His numbers languishing.
'Tis time to leave the books in dust, 5
And oil the unused armour's rust :
Removing from the wall
The corslet of the hall.
So restless Cromwell could not cease
In the inglorious arts of peace, 10
But through adventurous war
Urged his active star.
And like the three-forked lightning, first
Breaking the clouds where it was nurst,
Did through his own side 15
His fiery way divide.
For 'tis all one to courage high
The emulous or enemy ;
And with such to enclose
Is more than to oppose. 20
Then burning through the air he went
And palaces and temples rent :
And Caesar's head at last
Did through his laurels blast.
'Tis madness to resist or blame 25
The force of angry heaven's flame :
And, if we would speak true,
Much to the man is due.

What may not then our Isle presume
 While victory his crest does plume?
 What may not others fear
 If thus he crowns each year? 100
 A Cæsar he ere long to Gaul,
 To Italy an Hannibal,
 And to all states not free
 Shall Climacteric be.
 The Pict no shelter now shall find 105
 Within his parti-coloured mind;
 But from this valour sad
 Shrink underneath the plaid:
 Happy if in the tufted brake
 The English hunter him mistake; 110
 Nor lay his hounds in near
 The Caledonian deer.
 But thou, the war's and fortune's son,
 March indefatigably on;
 And for the last effect 115
 Still keep the sword erect:
 Besides the force it has to fright
 The spirits of the shady night,
 The same arts that did gain
 A power must it maintain. 120

JOHN MILTON

L'ALLEGRO

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus, and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn.

'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights
unholy,

Find out some uncouth cell,

5

Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;

There under ebon shades, and low-brow'd rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,

In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.

But come, thou goddess fair and free,

In Heaven yclep'd Euphrosyne,

And by men, heart-easing Mirth,

Whom lovely Venus at a birth

With two sister Graces more

15

To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore;

Or whether (as some sager sing) —

The frolic wind that breathes the spring,

Zephyr with Aurora playing,

As he met her once a-maying,

20

There on beds of violets blue,

And fresh-blown roses washed in dew, . .

Filled her with thee a daughter fair,

So buxom, blithe, and debonair.

Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee

25

Jest and youthful jollity,

Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,

Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
 Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
 And love to live in dimple sleek; 30
 Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
 And laughter holding both his sides.
 Come, and trip it as ye go
 On the light fantastic toe,
And in thy right hand lead with thee, 35
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty;
 And, if I give thee honour due,
 Mirth, admit me of thy crew
 To live with her, and live with thee,
 In unreproved pleasures free; 40
 To hear the lark begin his flight,
 And singing startle the dull Night,
 From his watch-tower in the skies,
 Till the dappled Dawn doth rise;
 Then to come in spite of sorrow, 45
And at my window bid good morrow,
 Through the sweet-brair, or the vine,
 Or the twisted eglantine.
 While the cock with lively din
 Scatters the rear of darkness thin, 50
 And to the stack, or the barn-door,
 Stoutly struts his dames before,
 Oft listening how the hounds and horn
 Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
 From the side of some hoar hill, 55
 Through the high wood echoing shrill :
 Sometime walking not unseen
 By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
 Right against the eastern gate,
 Where the great Sun begins his state, 60
 Robed in flames, and amber light,

The clouds in thousand liveries dight.
 While the ploughman near at hand
 Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
 And the milkmaid singeth blithe, 65
 And the mower whets his scythe,,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
 Whilst the landscape round it measures, 70
 Russet lawns, and fallows grey,
 Where the nibbling flocks do stray,
 Mountains on whose barren breast
 The labouring clouds do often rest :
 Meadows trim with daisies pied, 75-
 Shallow brooks, and rivers wide.
 Towers and battlements it sees
 Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes. 80
 Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes,
 From betwixt two aged oaks,
 Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,
 Are at their savoury dinner set
 Of herbs, and other country messes, 85
 Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;
 And then in haste her bower she leaves,
 With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
 Or if the earlier season lead,
 To the tanned haycock in the mead. 90

Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,

And the jocund rebecks sound
 To many a youth, and many a maid, 95
 Dancing in the chequered shade;
 And young and old come forth to play
 On a sunshine holiday,
 Till the livelong daylight fail;
 Then to the spicy nut-brown ale, 100
 With stories told of many a feat,
 How Faery Mab the junkets ate,
She was pinched and pulled, she said,
And he by Friar's lanthorn led;
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat, 105
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end,
 Then lies him down the lubber fiend, 110
 And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
 Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
 And cropful out of doors he flings,
 Ere the first cock his matin rings.
 Thus done the tales, to bed they creep, 115
 By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.

Towered cities please us then,
 And the busy hum of men,
 Where throngs of knights, and barons bold
 In weeds of peace high triumphs hold, 120
 With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
 Rain influence, and judge the prize
 Of wit, or arms, while both contend
 To win her grace, whom all commend,
 There let Hymen oft appear
 In saffron robe, with taper clear, 125

And Pomp, and Feast, and Revelry,
 With Mask, and antique Pageantry,
 Such sights as youthful poets dream
 On summer eves by haunted stream. 130

Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Johnson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

And ever against eating cares,
 Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
 Married to immortal Verse 135

Such as the meeting soul may pierce
 In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out, 140
With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,

The melting voices through mazes running:
Untwisting all the chains that tie

The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head 145
From golden slumber on a bed

Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
 Such strains as would have won the ear
 Of Pluto, to have quite set free
 His half-regained Eurydice. 150

These delights, if thou canst give,
 Mirth with thee, I mean to live

IL PENSEROSO

HENCE, vain deluding joys,
The brood of Folly without father bred!
How little you bestead,
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys! 5
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sunbeams,
Or likest hovering dreams
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train. 10
But hail, thou Goddess, sage and holy,
Hail, divinest Melancholy,
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight:
And therefore to our weaker view, 15
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue.
Black, but such as in esteem,
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauty's praise above 20
The sea nymphs, and their powers offended.
Yet thou art higher far descended,
Thee bright-haired Vesta long of yore,
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she (in Saturn's reign, 25
Such mixture was not held a stain)
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove. 30

Come, pensive nun, devout and pure,
 Sober, steadfast, and demure,
 All in a robe of darkest grain,
 Flowing with majestic train,
 And sable stole of Cypres lawn, 35
 Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
 Come, but keep thy wonted state,
 With even step, and musing gait,
 And looks commercing with the skies,
 Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes : 40
 There held in holy passion still,
 Forget thy self to marble, till
 With a sad leaden downward cast,
 Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
 And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet, 45
 Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
 And hears the Muses in a ring,
 Aye round about Jove's altar sing.
 And add to these retired Leisure,
 That in trim gardens takes his pleasure ; 50
 But first, and chiefest, with thee bring,
 Him that yon soars on golden wing,
 Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
 The cherub Contemplation ;
 And the mute Silence hist along, 55
 'Less Philomel will deign a song,
 In her sweetest, saddest plight,
 Smoothing the rugged brow of night,
 While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,
 Gently o'er th' accustomed oak ; 60
 Sweet bird that shunn'st the noise of folly,
 Most musical, most melancholy !
 Thee, chantress, oft the woods among,
 I woo to hear thy evensong ;

| | |
|--|----|
| And missing thee, I walk unseen | 65 |
| On the dry smooth-shaven green, | |
| To behold the wandering moon, | |
| Riding near her highest noon, | |
| Like one that had been led astray | |
| Through the Heaven's wide pathless way ; | 70 |
| And oft, as if her head she bowed, | |
| Stooping through a fleecy cloud. | |
| Oft on a plat of rising ground, | |
| I hear the far-off curfew sound, | |
| Over some wide-watered shore, | 75 |
| Swinging slow with sullen roar ; | |
| Or if the air will not permit, | |
| Some still removed place will fit, | |
| Where glowing embers through the room | |
| Teach light to counterfeit a gloom, | 80 |
| Far from all resort of mirth, | |
| Save the cricket on the hearth, | |
| Or the bellman's drowsy charm, | |
| To bless the doors from nightly harm : | |
| Or let my lamp at midnight hour | 85 |
| Be seen in some high lonely tower, | |
| Where I may oft out-watch the Bear, | |
| With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere | |
| The spirit of Plato to unfold | |
| What worlds, or what vast regions hold | 90 |
| The immortal mind that hath forsook | |
| Her mansion in this fleshly nook : | |
| And of those demons that are found | |
| In fire, air, flood, or under ground, | |
| Whose power hath a true consent | |
| With planet, or with element. | 95 |
| Some time let gorgeous Tragedy | |
| In sceptered pall come sweeping by, | |

Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
 Or the tale of Troy divine, 100
 Or what (though rare) of later age,
 Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.
 But, O sad virgin, that thy power
 Might raise Musaeus from this bower,
 Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing 105
 Such notes as warbled to the string,
 Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
 And made Hell grant what Love did seek.
 Or call up him that left half told
 The story of Cambuscan bold, 110
 Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
 And who had Canace to wife,
 That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
 And of the wondrous horse of brass,
 On which the Tartar king did ride; 115
 And if aught else, great bards beside
 In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
 Of tourneys and of trophies hung,
 Of forests, and enchantments drear,
 Where more is meant than meets the ear. 120

Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
 Till civil-suited Morn appear,
 Not tricked and frownc'd as she was wont,
 With the Attic boy to hunt,
 But kerchieft in a comely cloud, 125
 While rocking winds are piping loud,
 Or ushered with a shower still,
 When the gust hath blown his fill,
 Ending on the rustling leaves,
 With minute drops from off the eaves. 130
 And when the sun begins to fling

His flaring beams, me, Goddess, bring
 To arched walks of twilight groves,
 And shadows brown that Sylvan loves,
 Of pine, or monumental oak, 135
 Where the rude axe with heaved stroke,
 Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
 Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
 There in close covert by some brook,
 Where no profaner eye may look, 140
 Hide me from day's garish eye,
 While the bee with honey'd thigh
 That at her flowery work doth sing,
 And the waters murmuring
 With such consort as they keep, 145
 Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep;
 And let some strange mysterious dream
 Wave at his wings in airy stream
 Of lively portraiture displayed,
 Softly on my eyelids laid. 150
 And as I wake, sweet music breathe
 Above. about, or underneath,
 Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
 Or the unseen Genius of the wood.
 But let my due feet never fail, 155
 To walk the studious cloister's pale,
 And love the high embowed roof,
 With antique pillars massy-proof,
 And storied windows richly dight,
 Casting a dim religious light. 160
 There let the pealing organ blow,
 To the full voiced choir below,
 In service high, and anthems clear,
 As may with sweetness, through mine ear,

Dissolve me into ecstasies, 165
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.

And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell, 170
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew ;
Till old Experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give, 175
And I with thee will choose to live.

SONNETS

I

O NIGHTINGALE THAT ON YON BLOOMY SPRAY

O NIGHTINGALE, that on yon bloomy spray
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still,
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly hours lead on propitious May,
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day, 5
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill
Portend success in love. O if Jove's will
Have linked that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing; ere the rude bird of hate
Foretell my hopeless doom in some grove nigh: 10
As thou from year to year hast sung too late
For my relief; yet hadst no reason why,
Whether the Muse, or Love call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

II

ON HIS BEING ARRIVED TO THE AGE
OF TWENTY THREE

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth, 5
That I to manhood am arriv'd so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even 10
To that same lot, however mean or high,

Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven ;
 All is, if I have grace to use it so,
 As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.

III

WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED
TO THE CITY

CAPTAIN, or Colonel, or Knight in arms,
 Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,
 If ever deed of honour did thee please,
 Guard them, and him within protect from harms.
 He can requite thee, for he knows the charms 5
 That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
 And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
 Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
 Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower :
 The great Emathian conqueror did spare 10
 The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
 Went to the ground ; and the repeated air
 Of sad Electra's poet had the power
 To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.

IV

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT

A VENGE, O Lord, Thy slaughtered Saints, whose
 bones
 Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,
 Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old
 When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
 Forget not : in Thy book record their groans 5
 Who were Thy sheep and in their ancient fold
 Slain by the bloody Piemontese that rolled
 Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans

The Vales redoubled to the hills, and they
 To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow 10
 O'er all the Italian fields where still doth sway
 The triple Tyrant : that from these may grow
 A hundred-fold, who having learnt Thy way
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

V

ON HIS BLINDNESS

WHEN I consider how my light is spent,
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
 And that one Talent which is death to hide,
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present 5
 My true account, lest He returning chide,
 Doth God exact day-labour, light denied,
 I fondly ask;—But patience to prevent
 That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
 Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best 10
 Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best : His
 state
 Is kingly. Thousands at His bidding speed
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest :
 They also serve who only stand and wait.

VI

ON HIS DECEASED WIFE

METHOUGHT I saw my late espoused Saint
 Brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave,
 Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
 Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.
 Mine, as whom washed from spot of childbed taint 5
 Purification in the old Law did save,

And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind :
Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight, 10
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But O ! as to embrace me she inclined
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night.

THOMAS GRAY

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

THE curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight, 5
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
'Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain 10
Of such, as wand'ring near the secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid, 15
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. 20

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care :

No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield, 25
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke :
How jocund did they drive their team afield !
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke !

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ; 30
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour : 35
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault,
If Mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise. 40

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath ?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death ?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid 45
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire ;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll : 50

Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear :
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air. 55

Some village-Hampden that with dauntless breast
The little Tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood. 60

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade : nor circumscribed alone 65
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined ;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne.
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame, 70
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife
Their sober wishes never learned to stray ;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life 75
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,
 Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. 80

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unlettered muse,
 The place of fame and elegy supply :
 And many a holy text around she strews,
 That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
 This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
 Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
 Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind? 85

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
 Some pious drops the closing eye requires ;
 E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
 E'en in our Ashes live their wonted Fires. 90

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonoured Dead,
 Dost in these lines their artless tale relate ;
 If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
 Some kindred Spirit shall inquire thy fate. 95

Haply some hoary-headed Swain may say,
 'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
 Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
 To meet the sun upon the upland lawn. 100

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
 That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
 His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
 And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
 Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove : 105

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

'One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree; 110
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

'The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay 115
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn: '

THE EPITAPH.

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own. 120

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send :
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend.

No further seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode, 125
(There they alike in trembling hope repose.)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

THE TRAVELLER

OR

A PROSPECT OF SOCIETY

REMOTE, unfriended, melancholy, slow,
Or by the lazy Scheldt, or wandering Po;
Or onward, where the rude Corinthian boor
Against the houseless stranger shuts the door;
Or where Campania's plain forsaken lies, 5
A weary waste expanding to the skies:
Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee;
Still to my brother turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain. 10

Eternal blessings crown my earliest friend,
And round his dwelling guardian saints attend,
Bless'd be that spot, where cheerful guests retire
To pause from toil, and trim their ev'ning fire;
Bless'd that abode, where want and pain repair, 15
And every stranger finds a ready chair;
Bless'd be those feasts with simple plenty crown'd,
Where all the ruddy family around
Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,
Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale, 20
Or press the bashful stranger to his food,
And learn the luxury of doing good.

But me, not destined such delights to share,
My prime of life in wand'ring spent and care,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Impelled, with steps unceasing, to pursue 25
Some fleeting good, that mocks me with the view;
That, like the circle bounding earth and skies,
Allures from far, yet, as I follow, flies;
My fortune leads to traverse realms alone,
And find no spot of all the world my own. 30

E'en now, where Alpine solitudes ascend,
I sit me down a pensive hour to spend;
And, placed on high above the storm's career,
Look downward where a hundred realms appear;
Lakes, forests, cities, plains, extending wide,
The pomp of kings, the shepherd's humbler pride.

When thus Creation's charms around combine,
Amidst the store, should thankless pride repine?
Say, should the philosophic mind disdain
That good, which makes each humbler bosom vain? 40
Let school-taught pride dissemble all it can,
These little things are great to little man;
And wiser he, whose sympathetic mind
Exults in all the good of all mankind.
Ye glitt'ring towns, with wealth and splendour
crowned, 45
Ye fields, where summer spreads profusion round,
Ye lakes, whose vessels catch the busy gale,
Ye bending swains, that dress the flow'ry vale,
For me your tributary stores combine;
Creation's heir, the world, the world is mine! 50

As some lone miser visiting his store,
Bends at his treasure, counts, recounts it o'er;
Hoards after hoards his rising raptures fill,
Yet still he sighs, for hoards are wanting still;

Thus to my breast alternate passions rise, 55
 Pleased with each good that heaven to man supplies :
 Yet oft a sigh prevails, and sorrows fall,
 To see the hoard of human bliss so small ;
 And oft I wish, amidst the scene, to find
 Some spot to real happiness consigned, 60
 Where my worn soul, each wand'ring hope at rest,
 May gather bliss to see my fellows bless'd.

But where to find that happiest spot below,
 Who can direct, when all pretend to know ?
 The shudd'ring tenant of the frigid zone 65
 Boldly proclaims that happiest spot his own,
 Extols the treasures of his stormy seas,
 And his long nights of revelry and ease ;
 The naked negro, panting at the line,
 Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine, 70
 Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,
 And thanks his gods for all the good they gave.
 Such is the patriot's boast, where'er we roam,
 His first, best country ever is, at home.
 And yet, perhaps, if countries we compare, 75
 And estimate the blessings which they share,
 Though patriots flatter, still shall wisdom find
 An equal portion dealt to all mankind,
 As different good, by Art or Nature given,
 To different nations makes their blessings even. 80

Nature, a mother kind alike to all,
 Still grants her bliss at Labour's earnest call ;
 With food as well the peasant is supplied
 On Idra's cliffs as Arno's shelvy side ;
 And though the rocky-crested summits frown, 85
 These rocks, by custom, turn to beds of down,

From Art more various are the blessings sent ;
 Wealth, commerce, honour, liberty, content.
 Yet these each other's power so strong contest,
 That either seems destructive of the rest. 90
 Where wealth and freedom reign, contentment fails,
 And honour sinks where commerce long prevails..
 Hence every state to one loved blessing prone,
 Conforms and models life to that alone.
 Each to the favourite happiness attends, 95
 And spurns the plan that aims at other ends ;
 Till, carried to excess in each domain,
 This favourite good begets peculiar pain.

But let us try these truths with closer eyes,
 And trace them through the prospect as it lies : 100
 Here for a while my proper cares resigned,
 Here let me sit in sorrow for mankind,
 Like yon neglected shrub at random cast
 That shades the steep, and sighs at every blast.

Far to the right where Apennine ascends, 105
 Bright as the summer, Italy extends ;
 Its uplands sloping deck the mountain's side,
 Woods over woods in gay theatric pride ;
 While oft some temple's mould'ring tops between
 With venerable grandeur mark the scene. 110

Could Nature's bounty satisfy the breast,
 The sons of Italy were surely blest.
 Whatever fruits in different climes were found,
 That proudly rise, or humbly court the ground ;
 Whatever blooms in torrid tracts appear, 115
 Whose bright succession decks the varied year ;
 Whatever sweets salute the northern sky
 With vernal lives that blossom but to die ;

These here disporting own the kindred soil,
 Nor ask luxuriance from the planter's toil; 120
 While the sea-born gales their gelid wings expand
 To winnow fragrance round the smiling land.

But small the bliss that sense alone bestows,
 And sensual bliss is all the nation knows.
 In florid beauty groves and fields appear, 125
 Man seems the only growth that dwindles here.
 Contrasted faults through all his manners reign;
 Though poor, luxurious; though submissive, vain;
 Though grave, yet trifling; zealous, yet untrue;
 And e'en in penance planning sins anew. 130
 All evils here contaminate the mind,
 That opulence departed leaves behind;
 For wealth was theirs, not far removed the date,
 When commerce proudly flourished through the state;
 At her command the palace learned to rise, 135
 Again the long-fall'n column sought the skies;
 The canvas glowed beyond e'en Nature warm,
 The pregnant quarry teemed with human form;
 Till, more unsteady than the southern gale,
 Commerce on other shores displayed her sail; 140
 While nought remained of all that riches gave,
 But towns unmanned, and lords without a slave;
 And late the nation found, with fruitless skill,
 Its former strength was but plethoric ill.

Yet still the loss of wealth is here supplied 145
 By arts, the splendid wrecks of former pride;
 From these the feeble heart and long-fall'n mind
 An easy compensation seem to find.
 Here may be seen, in bloodless pomp arrayed,
 The paste-board triumph and the cavalcade; 150

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Processions formed for piety and love,
 A mistress or a saint in every grove.
 By sports like these are all their cares beguiled,
 The sports of children satisfy the child;
 Each nobler aim, repressed by long control, 155
 Now sinks at last, or feebly mans the soul;
 While low delights, succeeding fast behind,
 In happier meanness occupy the mind:
 As in those domes, where Caesars once bore sway,
 Defaced by time and tottering in decay, 160
 There in the ruin, heedless of the dead,
 The shelter-seeking peasant builds his shed,
 And, wond'ring man could want the larger pile,
 Exults, and owns his cottage with a smile.

My soul, turn from them; turn we to survey 165
 Where rougher climes a nobler race display,
 Where the bleak Swiss their stormy mansions tread,
 And force a churlish soil for scanty bread;
 No product here the barren hills afford,
 But man and steel, the soldier and his sword; 170
 No vernal blooms their torpid rocks array,
 But winter ling'ring chills the lap of May;
 No Zephyr fondly sues the mountain's breast,
 But meteors glare, and stormy glooms invest.

Yet still, e'en here, content can spread a charm, 175
 Redress the crime, and all its rage disarm.
 Though poor the peasant's hut, his feasts though
 small,
 He sees his little lot the lot of all;
 Sees no contiguous palace rear its head
 To shame the meanness of his humble shed; 180
 No costly lord the sumptuous banquet deal

To make him loathe his vegetable meal;
 But, calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,
 Each wish contracting, fits him to the soil.
 Cheerful at morn he wakes from short repose, 185
 Breasts the keen air, and carols as he goes;
 With patient angle trolls the finny deep,
 Or drives his vent'rous plough-share to the steep;
 Or seeks the den where snow-tracks mark the way,
 And drags the struggling savage into day. 190
 At night returning, every labour sped,
 He sits him down the monarch of a shed;
 Smiles by his cheerful fire, and round surveys
 His children's looks, that brighten at the blaze;
 While his loved partner, boastful of her hoard, 195
 Displays her cleanly platter on the board:
 And haply too some pilgrim, thither led,
 With many a tale repays the nightly bed.

Thus every good his native wilds impart,
 Imprints the patriot passion on his heart, 200
 And e'en those ills, that round his mansion rise,
 Enhance the bliss his scanty fund supplies.
 Dear is that shed to which his soul conforms,
 And dear that hill which lifts him to the storms;
 And as a child, when scaring sounds molest, 205
 Cling close and closer to the mother's breast,
 So the loud torrent, and the whirlwind's roar,
 But bind him to his native mountains more.

Such are the charms to barren states assigned;
 Their wants but few, their wishes all confined. 210
 Yet let them only share the praises due,
 If few their wants, their pleasures are but few;

For every want that stimulates the breast,
 Becomes a source of pleasure when redrest.
 Whence from such lands each pleasing science flies, 215
 That first excites desire, and then supplies;
 Unknown to them, when sensual pleasures cloy,
 To fill the languid pause with finer joy;
 Unknown those powers that raise the soul to flame,
 Catch every nerve, and vibrate through the frame. 220
 Their level life is but a smould'ring fire,
 Unquenched by want, unfanned by strong desire;
 Unfit for raptures, or, if raptures cheer
 On some high festival of once a year,
 In wild excess the vulgar breast takes fire, 225
 Till, buried in debauch, the bliss expire.

But not their joys alone thus coarsely flow:
 Their morals, like their pleasures, are but low;
 For, as refinement stops, from sire to son
 Unaltered, unimproved the manners run; 230
 And love's and friendship's finely pointed dart
 Fall blunted from each indurated heart.
 Some sterner virtues o'er the mountain's breast
 May sit, like falcons cowering on the nest;
 But all the gentler morals, such as play 235
 Through life's more cultured walks, and charm the
 way,
 These far dispersed, on timorous pinions fly,
 To sport and flutter in a kinder sky.

To kinder skies, where gentler manners reign,
 I turn; and France displays her bright domain. 240
 Gay sprightly land of mirth and social ease,
 Pleased with thyself whom all the world can please,
 How often have I led thy sportive choir,

With tuneless pipe, beside the murmuring Loire!
 Where shading elms along the margin grew, 245
 And freshened from the wave the Zephyr flew;
 And haply, though my harsh touch falt'ring still,
 But mocked all tune, and marred the dancer's skill;
 Yet would the village praise my wondrous power,
 And dance, forgetful of the noon-tide hour. 250
 Alike all ages. Dames of ancient days
 Have led their children through the mirthful maze,
 And the gay grandsire, skilled in gestic lore,
 Has frisked beneath the burthen of threescore.

So bless'd a life these thoughtless realms display, 255
 Thus idly busy rolls their world away:
 Theirs are those arts that mind to mind endear,
 For honour forms the social temper here:
 Honour, that praise which real merit gains.
 Or e'en imaginary worth obtains, 260
 Here passes current; paid from hand to hand,
 It shifts in splendid traffic round the land:
 From courts, to camps, to cottages it strays,
 And all are taught an avarice of praise;
 They please, are pleased, they give to get esteem, 265
 Till, seeming bless'd, they grow to what they seem.

But while this softer art their bliss supplies,
 It gives their follies also room to rise;
 For praise too dearly loved, or warmly sought,
 Enfeebles all internal strength of thought; 270
 And the weak soul, within itself unblest,
 Leans for all pleasure on another's breast.
 Hence ostentation here, with tawdry art,
 Pants for the vulgar praise which fools impart;
 Here vanity assumes her pert grimace, 275

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

And trims her robes of frieze with copper lace;
 Here beggar pride defrauds her daily cheer,
 To boast one splendid banquet once a year;
 The mind still turns where shifting fashion draws,
 Nor weighs the solid worth of self-applause. 280

To men of other minds my fancy flies,
 Embosomed in the deep where Holland lies.
 Methinks her patient sons before me stand,
 Where the broad ocean leans against the land,
 And, sedulous to stop the coming tide, 285
 Lift the tall rampire's artificial pride.
 Onward, methinks, and diligently slow,
 The firm-connected bulwark seems to grow;
 Spreads its long arms amidst the wat'ry roar,
 Scoops out an empire, and usurps the shore; 290
 While the pent ocean rising o'er the pile,
 Sees an amphibious world beneath him smile,
 The slow canal, the yellow-blossomed vale,
 The willow-tufted bank, the gliding sail,
 The crowded mart, the cultivated plain, 295
 A new creation rescued from his reign.

Thus, while around the wave-subjected soil
 Impels the native to repeated toil,
 Industrious habits in each bosom reign,
 And industry begets a love of gain. 300
 Hence all the good from opulence that springs,
 With all those ills superfluous treasure brings,
 Are here displayed. Their much-loved wealth imparts
 Convenience, plenty, elegance, and arts;
 But view them closer, craft and fraud appear, 305
 E'en liberty itself is bartered here.
 At gold's superior charms all freedom flies,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

The needy sell it, and the rich man buys;
 A land of tyrants, and a den of slaves,
 Here wretches seek dishonourable graves, 310
 And calmly bent, to servitude conform,
 Dull as their lakes that slumber in the storm.

Heavens! how unlike their Belgic sires of old!
 Rough, poor, content, ungovernably bold;
 War in each breast, and freedom on each brow; 315
 How much unlike the sons of Britain now!

Fired at the sound, my genius spreads her wing,
 And flies where Britain courts the western spring;
 Where lawns extend that scorn Arcadian pride,
 And brighter streams than famed Hydaspes glide. 320
 There all around the gentlest breezes stray,
 There gentle music melts on every spray;
 Creation's mildest charms are there combined,
 Extremes are only in the master's mind!
 Stern o'er each bosom reason holds her state, 325
 With daring aims irregularly great;
 Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
 I see the lords of human kind pass by,
 Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,
 By forms unfashioned, fresh from Nature's hand; 330
 Fierce in their native hardness of soul,
 True to imagined right, above control,
 While e'en the peasant boasts these rights to scan,
 And learns to venerate himself as man.

Thine, Freedom, thine the blessings pictured here, 335
 Thine are those charms that dazzle and endear;
 Too bless'd, indeed, were such without alloy,
 But fostered e'en by Freedom, ills annoy:

That independence Britons prize too high,
 Keeps man from man, and breaks the social tie; 340
 The self-dependent lordlings stand alone,
 All claims that bind and sweeten life unknown;
 Here by the bonds of nature feebly held,
 Minds combat minds, repelling and repelled.
 Ferments arise, imprisoned factions roar, 345
 Repressed ambition struggles round her shore,
 Till over-wrought, the general system feels
 Its motions stop, or frenzy fire the wheels.

Nor this the worst. As nature's ties decay,
 As duty, love, and honour fail to sway, 350
 Fictitious bonds, the bonds of wealth and law,
 Still gather strength, and force unwilling awe.
 Hence all obedience bows to these alone,
 And talent sinks, and merit weeps unknown;
 Till time may come, when stripped of all her charms, 355
 The land of scholars, and the nurse of arms,
 Where noble stems transmit the patriot flame,
 Where kings have toiled, and poets wrote for fame,
 One sink of level avarice shall lie,
 And scholars, soldiers, kings, unhonoured die. 360

Yet think not, thus when Freedom's ills I state,
 I mean to flatter kings, or court the great;
 Ye powers of truth, that bid my soul aspire,
 Far from my bosom drive the low desire;
 And thou, fair Freedom, taught alike to feel 365
 The rabble's rage, and tyrant's angry steel;
 Thou transitory flower, alike undone
 By proud contempt, or favour's fostering sun,
 Still may thy blooms the changeful clime endure,
 I only would repress them to secure : 370

For just experience tells, in every soil,
 That those who think must govern those that toil;
 And all that Freedom's highest aims can reach,
 Is but to lay proportioned loads on each.
 Hence, should one order disproportioned grow, 375
 Its double weight must ruin all below.

O then how blind to all that truth requires,
 When first ambition struck at regal power;
 Calm is my soul, nor apt to rise in arms,
 Except when fast-approaching danger warms : 380
 But when contending chiefs blockade the throne,
 Contracting regal power to stretch their own;
 When I behold a factious band agree
 To call it freedom when themselves are free;
 Each wanton judge new penal statutes draw, 385
 Laws grind the poor, and rich men rule the law;
 The wealth of climes, where savage nations roam,
 Pillaged from slaves to purchase slaves at home;
 Fear, pity, justice, indignation start,
 Tear off reserve, and bare my swelling heart; 390
 Till half a patriot, half a coward grown,
 I fly from petty tyrants to the throne.

Yes, brother, curse with me that baleful hour,
 When first ambition struck at regal power;
 And thus polluting honour in its source, 395
 Gave wealth to sway the mind with double force.
 Have we not seen, round Britain's peopled shore,
 Her useful sons exchanged for useless ore?
 Seen all her triumphs but destruction haste,
 Like flaring tapers bright'ning as they waste; 400
 Seen opulence, her grandeur to maintain,
 Lead stern depopulation in her train,

And over fields where scattered hamlets rose,
 In barren solitary pomp repose?
 Have we not seen, at pleasure's lordly call, 405
 The smiling long-frequented village fall?
 Beheld the duteous son, the sire decayed,
 The modest matron, and the blushing maid,
 Forced from their homes, a melancholy train,
 To traverse climes beyond the western main; 410
 Where wild Oswego spreads her swamps around,
 And Niagara stuns with thund'ring sound?

E'en now, perhaps, as there some pilgrim strays
 Through tangled forests, and through dangerous ways :
 Where beasts with man divided empire claim, 415
 And the brown Indian marks with murd'rous aim ;
 There, while above the giddy tempest flies,
 And all around distressful yells arise,
 The pensive exile, bending with his woe,
 To stop too fearful, and too faint to go, 420
 Casts a long look where England's glories shine,
 And bids his bosom sympathize with mine.

Vain, very vain, my weary search to find
 That bliss which only centres in the mind :
 Why have I strayed from pleasure and repose, 425
 To seek a good each government bestows ?
 In every government, though terrors reign,
 Though tyrant kings, or tyrant laws restrain,
 How small, of all that human hearts endure,
 That part which laws or kings can cause or cure. 430
 Still to ourselves in every place consigned,
 Our own felicity we make or find :
 With secret course, which no loud storms annoy,
 Glides the smooth current of domestic joy.

The lifted axe, the agonizing wheel,
Luke's iron crown, and Damiens' bed of steel,
To men remote from power that rarely known,
Leave reason, faith, and conscience, all our own.

435

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

SWEET Auburn ! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered the labouring
swain,

Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed :
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease, 5
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene ;
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm, 10
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topped the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whisp'ring lovers made ;
How often have I blessed the coming day, 15
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree ;
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed ; 20
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round ;
And still as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired ;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown, 25
By holding out to tire each other down ;
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,
While secret laughter tittered round the place ;
The bashful virgin's side-long looks of love,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

The matron's glance that would those looks reprove, 30
 These were thy charms, sweet village; sports like these,
 With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please;
 These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,
 These were thy charms—But all these charms are fled.

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn, 35
 Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
 Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
 And desolation saddens all thy green:
 One only master grasps the whole domain,
 And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain: 40
 No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
 But choked with sedges, works its weedy way.
 Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
 The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
 Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies, 45
 And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
 Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
 And the long grass o'ertops the mould'ring wall;
 And trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
 Far, far away, thy children leave the land. 50

Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,
 Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
 Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
 A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
 But a bold peasantry, their country's pride, 55
 When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
 When every rood of ground maintained its man;
 For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
 Just gave what life required, but gave no more: 60

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose, 65
Unwieldy wealth, and cumbrous pomp repose;
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room, 70
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green;
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour, 75
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
Here as I take my solitary rounds,
Amidst thy tangling walks, and ruined grounds,
And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew, 80
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes my latest hours to crown, 85
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill, 90
Around my fire an evening group to draw,

And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
 And, as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,
 Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
 I still had hopes, my long vexations passed, 95
 Here to return—and die at home at last.

O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
 Retreats from care, that never must be mine,
 How happy he who crowns in shades like these,
 A youth of labour with an age of ease; 100
 Who quits a world where strong temptations try
 And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly!
 For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
 Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;
 No surly porter stands in guilty state 105
 To spurn imploring famine from the gate;
 But on he moves to meet his latter end,
 Angels around befriending Virtue's friend;
 Bends to the grave with unperceived decay,
 While Resignation gently slopes the way; 110
 And, all his prospects bright'ning to the last,
 His Heaven Commences ere the world be pass'd!

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
 Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
 There, as I passed with careless steps and slow, 115
 The mingling notes came softened from below;
 The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,
 The sober herd that lowed to meet their young;
 The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
 The playful children just let loose from school; 120
 The watchdog's voice that bayed the whisp'ring wind,
 And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind:
 These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,

And filled each pause the nightingale had made.
 But now the sounds of population fail, 125
 No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
 No busy steps the grass-grown foot-way tread,
 For all the bloomy flush of life is fled.
 All but yon widowed, solitary thing
 That feebly bends beside the plashy spring; 130
 She, wretched matron, forced, in age, for bread,
 To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
 To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
 To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn;
She only left of all the harmless train, 135
The sad historian of the pensive plain. A

♪ Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
 And still where many a garden flower grows wild;
 There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
 The village preacher's modest mansion rose. 140
 A man he was to all the country dear,
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
 Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
 Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place;
 Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power, 145
 By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
 Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
 More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
 His house was known to all the vagrant train,
 He chid their wand'rings, but relieved their pain; 150
 The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
 Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
 The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
 Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;
 The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay 155
 Sat by his fire, and talked the night away;

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch, and showed how fields were
won.

Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe; 160
Careless their merits, or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings leaned to Virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call, 165
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all.
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way. 170

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismayed,
The reverend champion stood. At his control,
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise, 175
And his last falt'ring accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray. 180
The service passed, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
E'en children followed with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile.
His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed, 185
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distressed;

To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
 But all his serious thoughts had rest in Heaven.
As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm, 190
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
 With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,
 There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule, 195
 The village master taught his little school;
 A man severe he was, and stern to view;
 I knew him well, and every truant knew;
 Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
 The day's disasters in his morning face; 200
 Full well they laughed, with counterfeited glee,
 At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
 Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
 Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned;
 Yet he was kind; or if severe in aught, 205
 The love he bore to learning was in fault;
 The village all declared how much he knew;
 'Twas certain he could write, and cypher too;
 Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
 And e'en the story ran that he could gauge. 210
 In arguing too, the parson owned his skill,
 For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still;
 While words of learned length and thund'ring sound
 Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around,
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew. 215

But past is all his fame. The very spot
 Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,
 Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye, 220
 Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
 Where grey-beard mirth and smiling toil retired,
 Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
 And news much older than their ale went round.
 Imagination fondly stoops to trace 225
 The parlour splendours of that festive place;
 The white-washed wall, the nicely sanded floor,
 The varnished clock that clicked behind the door;
 The chest contrived a double debt to pay,
 A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day; 230
 The pictures placed for ornament and use,
 The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose;
 The hearth, except when winter chilled the day,
 With aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay;
 While broken tea-cups, wisely kept for show, 235
 Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row.

Vain, transitory splendours! Could not all
 Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall!
 Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
 An hour's importance to the poor man's heart; 240
 Thither no more the peasant shall repair
 To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
 No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
 No more the wood-man's ballad shall prevail;
 No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear, 245
 Relax his pond'rous strength, and lean to hear;
 The host himself no longer shall be found
 Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;
 Nor the coy maid, half willing to be pressed,
 Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest. 250

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
 These simple blessings of the lowly train;
 To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
 One native charm, than all the gloss of art;
 Spontaneous joys, where Nature has its play, 255
 The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway;
 Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined:
 But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
 With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed, 260
 In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
 The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;
 And, e'en while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy.

Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen, who survey 265
 The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,
 'Tis yours to judge, how wide the limits stand
 Between a splendid and a happy land.
 Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,
 And shouting Folly hails them from her shore; 270
 Hoards, e'en beyond the miser's wish abound,
 And rich men flock from all the world around.
 Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a name
 That leaves our useful products still the same.
 Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride 275
 Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
 Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds;
 Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds;
 The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth
 Has robbed the neighbouring fields of half their
 growth, 280
 His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
 Indignant spurns the cottage from the green;

Around the world each needful product flies,
 For all the luxuries the world supplies :
 While thus the land adorned for pleasure, all 285
 In barren splendour feebly waits the fall.

As some fair female unadorned and plain,
 Secure to please while youth confirms her reign,
 Slights every borrowed charm that dress supplies,
 Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes : 290
 But when those charms are passed, for charms are frail,
 When time advances, and when lovers fail,
 She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,
 In all the glaring impotence of dress.
 Thus fares the land, by luxury betrayed, 295
 In nature's simplest charm at first arrayed ;
 But verging to decline, its splendours rise,
 Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise ;
 While scourged by famine from the smiling land,
 The mournful peasant leads his humble band ; 300
 And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms—a garden, and a grave.

Where then, ah ! where, shall poverty reside,
 To 'scape the pressure of contiguous pride ?
 If to some common's fenceless limits strayed, 305
 He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
 Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
 And e'en the bare-worn common is denied.

If to the city sped—what waits him there ?
 To see profusion that he must not share ; 310
 To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
 To pamper luxury, and thin mankind ;
 To see those joys the sons of pleasure know

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Extorted from his fellow creature's woe,
Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade, 315
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade;
Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
The dome where Pleasure holds her midnight reign
Here, richly decked, admits the gorgeous train; 320
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,
The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy!
Sure these denote one universal joy!
Are these thy serious thoughts?—Ah, turn thine eyes
Where the poor houseless shiv'ring female lies. 326
She once, perhaps, in village plenty bless'd,
Has wept at tales of innocence distress'd;
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn; 330
Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head,
And, pinched with cold, and shrinking from the
shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour
When idly first, ambitious of the town, 335
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.

Do thine, sweet Auburn, thine, the loveliest train,
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?
E'en now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they ask a little bread!

Ah, no. To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe.

Far different there from all that charmed before, 345
 The various terrors of that horrid shore;
 Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
 And fiercely shed intolerable day;
 Those matted woods where birds forget to sing,
 But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling; 350
 Those pois'nous fields with rank luxuriance crowned,
 Where the dark scorpion gathers death around;
 Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
 The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake;
 Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey, 355
 And savage men more murd'rous still than they;
 While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
 Mingling the ravaged landscape with the skies.
 Far different these from every former scene,
 The cooling brook, the grassy-vested green, 360
 The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
 That only sheltered thefts of harmless love.

Good heaven! what sorrows gloomed that parting
 day,
 That called them from their native walks away;
 When the poor exiles, every pleasure passed, 365
 Hung round their bowers, and fondly looked their last,
 And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
 For seats like these beyond the western main;
 And shudd'ring still to face the distant deep,
 Returned and wept, and still returned to weep. 370
 The good old sire, the first prepared to go
 To new-found worlds, and wept for others' woe;
 But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
He only wished for worlds beyond the grave. ✕
 His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears, 375
 The fond companion of his helpless years,

Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
 And left a lover's for a father's arms.
 With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,
 And bless'd the cot where every pleasure rose 380
 And kissed her thoughtless babes with many a tear,
 And clasped them close, in sorrow doubly dear;
 Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief
 In all the silent manliness of grief.

O Luxury! thou curs'd by Heaven's decree, 385
 How ill exchanged are things like these for thee!
 How do thy potions, with insidious joy
 Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!
 Kingdoms, by thee, to sickly greatness grown,
 Boast of a florid vigour not their own; 390
 At every draught more large and large they grow,
 A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe;
 Till sapped their strength, and every part unsound,
 Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin around.

E'en now the devastation is begun, 395
 And half the business of destruction done;
 E'en now, methinks, as pond'ring here I stand,
 I see the rural virtues leave the land:
 Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail,
 That idly waiting flaps with every gale, 400
 Downward they move, a melancholy band,
 Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
 Contented toil, and hospitable care,
 And kind connubial tenderness, are there;
 And piety, with wishes placed above, 405
 And steady loyalty, and faithful love.
 And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
 Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;

Unfit in these degenerate times of shame,
 To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame; 410
 Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
 My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
 Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
 That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
 Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel, 415
 Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!
 Farewell, and Oh! where'er thy voice be tried,
 On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
 Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
 Or winter wraps the polar world in snow, 420
 Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
 Redress the rigours of th' inclement clime;
 Aid slighted truth; with thy persuasive strain
 Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
 Teach him, that states of native strength possess'd, 425
 Though very poor, may still be very bless'd;
 That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
 As ocean sweeps the laboured mole away;
 While self-dependent power can time defy,
 As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

IT IS A BEAUTEOUS EVENING, CALM AND FREE

August, 1802.

IT is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea: 5
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought, 10
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

THOUGHT OF A BRITON ON THE SUBJUGATION OF SWITZERLAND

Two Voices are there; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains; each a mighty Voice :
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty !
There came a Tyrant. and with holy glee 5
Thou fought'st against him : but hast vainly striven :
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft : •
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left; 10
For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be
That Mountain floods should thunder as before,
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful Voice be heard by thee !

THE SOLITARY REAPER .

BEHOLD her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain, 5
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands 10
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas 15
Among the farthest Hebrides. ~

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago; 20
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang 25
As if her song could have no ending;

I saw her singing at her work,
And ov'r the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

30

LAODAMIA

“WITH sacrifice before the rising morn
Vows have I made by fruitless hope inspired;
And from the infernal Gods, 'mid shades forlorn
Of night, my slaughtered Lord have I required :
Celestial pity I again implore;— 5
Restore him to my sight—great Jove, restore !”

So speaking, and by fervent love endowed
With faith, the Suppliant heavenward lifts her hands;
While, like the sun emerging from a cloud,
Her countenance brightens—and her eye expands; 10
Her bosom heaves and spreads, her stature grows;
And she expects the issue in repose.

O terror ! what hath she perceived ?—O joy !
What doth she look on ?—whom doth she behold ?
Her Hero slain upon the beach of Troy ? 15
His vital presence ? his corporeal mould ?
It is—if sense deceive her not—'tis He !
And a God leads him, wingèd Mercury !

Mild Hermes spake—and touched her with his wand
That calms all fear; ‘Such grace hath crowned thy
prayer, 20

Laodamia ! that at Jove’s command
Thy husband walks the paths of upper air :
He comes to tarry with thee three hours’ space;
Accept the gift, behold him face to face !’

Forth sprang the impassioned Queen her Lord to clasp ; 25
Again that consummation she essayed ;

But unsubstantial Form eludes her grasp
 As often as that eager grasp was made.
 The Phantom parts—but parts to re-unite,
 And re-assume his place before her sight. 39

'Protesilaus, lo! thy guide is gone!
 Confirm, I pray, the vision with thy voice:
 This is our palace,—yonder is thy throne;
 Speak, and the floor thou tread'st on will rejoice.
 Not to appal me have the gods bestowed 35
 This precious boon; and blest a sad abode.'

'Great Jove, Laodamia! doth not leave
 His gifts imperfect:—Spectre though I be,
 I am not sent to scare thee or deceive;
 But in reward of thy fidelity. 40
 And something also did my worth obtain;
For fearless virtue bringeth boundless gain.

'Thou knowest, the Delphic oracle foretold
 That the first Greek who touched the Trojan strand
 Should die; but me the threat could not withhold: 45
 A generous cause a victim did demand;
 And forth I leapt upon the sandy plain;
A self-devoted chief—by Hector slain.'

'Supreme of Heroes—bravest, noblest, best!
 Thy matchless courage I bewail no more,
 Which then, when tens of thousands were deprest 50
 By doubt, propelled thee to the fatal shore;
 Thou found'st—and I forgive thee—here thou art—
 A nobler counsellor than my poor heart.

'But thou, though capable of sternest deed, 55
 Wert kind as resolute, and good as brave;

And he, whose power restores thee, hath decreed
 Thou shouldst elude the malice of the grave :
 Redundant are thy locks, thy lips as fair
 As when their breath enriched Thessalian air. 60

'No spectre greets me,—no vain Shadow this :
 Come, blooming Hero, place thee by my side !
 Give, on this well-known couch, one nuptial kiss
 To me, this day, a second time thy bride !'
 Jove frowned in heaven : the conscious Parcae threw 65
 Upon those roseate lips a Stygian hue.

'This visage tells thee that my doom is past :
 Nor should the change be mourned, even if the joys
 Of sense were able to return as fast
 And surely as they vanish. Earth destroys 70
 Those raptures duly—Erebus disdains :
 Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains.

'Be taught, O faithful Consort, to control
 Rebellious passion : for the Gods approve
 The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul : 75
 A fervent, not ungovernable, love.
 Thy transports moderate ; and meekly mourn
 When I depart, for brief is my sojourn—'

'Ah wherefore ?—Did not Hercules by force
 Wrest from the guardian Monster of the tomb 80
 Alcestis, a reanimated corse,
 Given back to dwell on earth in vernal bloom ?
 Medæ's spells dispersed the weight of years,
 And Aeson stood a youth 'mid youthful peers.

'The Gods to us are merciful—and they 85
 Yet further may relent : for mightier far

Than strength of nerve and sinew, or the sway
 Of magic potent over sun and star,
 Is love, though oft to agony distrest,
 And though his favourite seat be feeble woman's breast. 90

'But if thou goest, I follow—' 'Peace!' he said,—
 She looked upon him and was calmed and cheered:
 The ghastly colour from his lips had fled;
 In his deportment, shape, and mien, appeared
 Elysian beauty, melancholy grace, 95
 Brought from a pensive though a happy place.

He spake of love, such love as Spirits feel
 In worlds whose course is equable and pure;
 No fears to beat away—no strife to heal—
 The past unsighed for, and the future sure; 100
 Spake of heroic arts in graver mood
 Revived, with finer harmony pursued;

Of all that is most beautiful—imaged there
 In happier beauty; more pellucid streams,
 An ampler ether, a diviner air, 105
 And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
 Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
 Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey.

Yet there the Soul shall enter which has earned
 That privilege by virtue.—'Ill,' said he, 110
 'The end of man's existence I discerned,
 Who from ignoble games and revelry
 Could draw, when we had parted, vain delight,
 While years were thy best pastime, day and night;

'And while my youthful peers before my eyes
 (Each hero following his peculiar bent) 115

Prepared themselves for glorious enterprise
 By martial sports,—or, seated in the tent,
Chieftains and kings in council were detained ;
What time the fleet at Aulis lay enchained. 120

'The wished-for wind was given :—I then revolved
 The oracle, upon the silent sea ;
 And, if no worthier led the way, resolved
 That, of a thousand vessels, mine should be
 The foremost prow in pressing to the strand,—
 Mine the first blood that tinged the Trojan sand. 125

'Yet bitter, oft-times bitter, was the pang
 When of thy loss I thought, beloved Wife!
 On thee too fondly did my memory hang,
 And on the joys we shared in mortal life,—
 The paths which we had trod—these fountains, flowers ;
 My new-planned cities, and unfinished towers. 130

'But should suspense permit the Foe to cry,
 "Behold they tremble!—haughty their array,
 Yet of their number no one dares to die" ?
In soul I swept the indignity away : 135
Old frailties then recurred :—but lofty thought,
In act embodied, my deliverance wrought.

'And thou, though strong in love, art all too weak
 In reason, in self-government too slow ;
 I counsel thee by fortitude to seek 140
 Our blest re-union in the shades below.
 The invisible world with thee hath sympathized ;
Be thy affections raised and solemnized.

'Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend,—
 Seeking a higher object. Love was given, 145

Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;
 For this the passion to excess was driven—
That self might be annulled: her bondage prove
 The fetters of a dream opposed to love.'— 150

Aloud she shrieked! for Hermes re-appears!
 Round the dear Shade she would have clung—'tis vain:
 The hours are past—too brief had they been years;
 And him no mortal effort can detain:
 Swift, toward the realms that know not earthly day 155
He through the portal takes his silent way,
 And on the palace-floor a lifeless corse She lay.

Thus, all in vain exhorted and reprov'd,
 She perished; and, as for a wilful crime,
 By the just 'Gods whom no weak pity moved, 160
 Was doomed to wear out her appointed time,
Apart from happy Ghosts, that gather flowers
Of blissful quiet 'mid unfading bowers.

—Yet tears to human suffering are due;
And mortal hopes defeated and o'erthrown 165
Are mourned by man, and not by man alone,
As fondly he believes.—Upon the side
Of Hellespont (such faith was entertained)
 A knot of spiry trees for ages grew
 From out the tomb of him for whom she died; 170
 And ever, when such stature they had gained
 That Ilium's walls were subject to their view,
 The trees' tall summits withered at the sight;
 A constant interchange of growth and blight!

ELEGIAC STANZAS, SUGGESTED BY
A PICTURE OF PEELE CASTLE, IN A STORM,
PAINTED BY SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT

I WAS thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile!
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee :
I saw thee every day ; and all the while
Thy form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air ! 5
So like, so very like, was day to day !
Whene'er I looked, thy Image still was there ;
It trembled, but it never passed away.

How perfect was the calm ! it seemed no sleep ;
No mood, which season takes away, or brings : 10
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

Ah ! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express what then I saw ; and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land, 15
The consecration, and the Poet's dream ;

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile
Amid a world how different from this !
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile :
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss. 20

Thou shouldst have seemed a treasure-house divine
Of peaceful years ; a chronicle of heaven :—
Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine
The very sweetest had to thee been given.

A Picture had it been of lasting ease, 25
 Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;
 No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
 Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
 Such Picture would I at that time have made : 30
 And seen the soul of truth in every part,
 A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed.

So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
 I have submitted to a new control :
 A power is gone, which nothing can restore ; 35
 A deep distress hath humanised my Soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold
 A smiling sea, and be what I have been :
 The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old ;
 This, which I know, I speak with mind serene. 40

Then Beaumont, Friend ! who would have been the
 Friend,
 If he had lived, of Him whom I deplore,
 This work of thine I blame not, but commend ;
 This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

O 'tis a passionate Work !—yet wise and well, 45
 Well chosen is the spirit that is here ;
 That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,
 This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear !

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,
 I love to see the look with which it braves , 50
 Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time,
 The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known, 55
Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn. 60

RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE

I

THERE was a roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant wood;
Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods; 5
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

II

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops;—on the moors 10
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist; that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

III

I was a Traveller then upon the moor; 15
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:
The pleasant season did my heart employ:
My old remembrances went from me wholly; 20
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

IV

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,

As high as we have mounted in delight
 In our dejection do we sink as low ; 25
 To me that morning did it happen so ;
 And fears and fancies thick upon me came ;
 Dim sadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor
 • could name.

V

I heard the sky-lark warbling in the sky ;
 And I bethought me of the playful hare : 30
 Even such a happy Child of earth am I ;
 Even as these blissful creatures do I fare ;
 Far from the world I walk, and from all care ;
 But there may come another day to me—
 Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty. 35

VI

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
 As if life's business were a summer mood ;
 As if all needful things would come unsought
 To genial faith, still rich in genial good ;
 But how can He expect that others should 40
 Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
 Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all ?

VII

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
 The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride ;
 Of him who walked in glory and in joy 45
 Following his plough, along the mountain-side :
 By our own spirits are we deified :
 We Poets in our youth begin in gladness ;
 But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

VIII

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace, 50
 A leading from above, a something given,
 Yet it befell that, in this lonely place,
 When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
 Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven
 I saw a Man before me unawares : 55
 The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

IX

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
 Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
 Wonder to all who do the same espy,
 By what means it could thither come, and whence; 60
 So that it seems a thing endued with sense :
 Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
 Of rock or sand reposes, there to sun itself;

X

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,
 Nor all asleep—in his extreme old age : 65
 His body was bent double, feet and head
 Coming together in life's pilgrimage;
 As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
 Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
 A more than human weight upon his frame had cast. 70

XI

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,
 Upon a long grey staff of shaven wood :
 And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,
 Upon the margin of that moorish flood
 Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood, 75

That heareth not the loud winds when they call;
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

XII

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he conned, 80
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now a stranger's privilege I took;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
"This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

XIII

A gentle answer did the old Man make, 85
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew;
And him with further words I thus bespake,
"What occupation do you there pursue?
This is a lonesome place for one like you."
Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise 90
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes.

XIV

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest—
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach 95
Of ordinary men; a stately speech;
Such as grave Livers do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

XV

He told, that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches, being old and poor: 100

Employment hazardous and wearisome !
 And he had many hardships to endure :
 From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor ;
 Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance ;
 And in this way he gained an honest maintenance. 105

XVI

The old Man still stood talking by my side ;
 But now his voice to me was like a stream
 Scarce heard ; nor word from word could I divide ;
 And the whole body of the Man did seem
 Like one whom I had met with in a dream ; 110
 Or like a man from some far region sent,
 To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

XVII

My former thoughts returned : the fear that kills ;
 And hope that is unwilling to be fed ;
 Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills ; 115
 And mighty Poets in their misery dead.
 —Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,
 My question eagerly did I renew,
 "How is it that you live, and what is it you do?"

XVIII

He with a smile did then his words repeat ; 120
 And said that, gathering leeches, far and wide
 He travelled ; stirring thus about his feet
 The waters of the pools where they abide.
 "Once I could meet with them on every side ;
 But they have dwindled long by slow decay ; 125
 Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may."

XIX

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
 The old Man's shape, and speech—all troubled me :
 In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
 About the weary moors continually, 130
 Wandering about alone and silently.
 While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
 He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

XX

And soon with this he other matter blended,
 Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind, 135
 But stately in the main ; and, when he ended,
 I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
 In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.
 "God," said I, "be my help and stay secure ;
 I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor !" 140

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

In Seven Parts

PART THE FIRST

IT is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering
eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

*An ancient
Mariner meeteth
three Gallants
bidden to a wed-
ding-feast, and
detaileth one.*

'The Bridegroom's doors are opened
wide,

5

And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand.
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, greybeard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

10

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

*The Wedding-
Guest is spell-
bound by the eye
of the old sea-
faring man, and
constrained to
hear his tale.*

15

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner:

20

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

'The ship was cheered, the harbour
cleared,

Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

*The Mariner
tells how the ship
sailed southward
with a good
wind and fair
weather, till it
reached the Line.* 25

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

*The Wedding-
Guest heareth the
bridal music; but
the Mariner con-
tinueth his tale.* 30

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

35

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

40

'And now the Storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

*The ship
drawn by a
storm toward
the South Pole.*

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,

45

- And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo!
- In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke
white,
Glimmered the white moonshine.
- 'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee
thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—'With my cross-
bow
I shot the Albatross!'
- good omen, and
followeth the
ship as it return-
ed northward
through fog and
floating ice.* 75
- The ancient
Mariner inhos-
pitably killeth
the pious bird of
good omen.* 80

PART THE SECOND

- 'The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.
- And the good south wind still blew
behind.
- But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!
- And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the brèeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!
- His shipmates
cry out against
the ancient
Mariner for
killing the bird
of good luck.* 85 90 95

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
 The glorious Sun uprist :
 Then all averred, I had killed the bird
 That brought the fog and mist.
 'Twas right, said they, such birds to
 slay,

*But when the
 fog cleared off,
 they justify the
 same, and thus
 make themselves
 accomplices in
 the crime.*

100

That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam
 flew,
 The furrow followed free;
 We were the first that ever burst
 Into that silent sea.

*The fair breeze
 continues; the
 ship enters the
 Pacific Ocean
 and sails north-
 ward, even till
 it reaches
 the Line.*

105

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt
 down,
 'Twas sad as sad could be;
 And we did speak only to break
 The silence of the sea !

*The ship hath
 been suddenly
 becalmed.*

110

All in a hot and copper sky,
 The bloody Sun, at noon,
 Right up above the mast did stand,
 No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
 We stuck, nor breath nor motion :
 As idle as a painted ship
 Upon a painted ocean.

115

Water, water, everywhere,
 And all the boards did shrink;
 Water, water, everywhere,
 Nor any drop to drink.

*And the Alba-
 tross begins to be
 avenged.*

120

The very deep did rot : O Christ !
That ever this should be !
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

125

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assured were
Of the spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

A spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels;

130

And every tongue, through utter
drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

135

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

*The shipmates,
in their sore dis-
tress, would
fain throw the
whole guilt on
the ancient
Mariner: in sign
whereof they
hang the dead
sea-bird round
his neck.*

140

PART THE THIRD

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,

*The ancient
Mariner behold-
eth a sign in the
element afar off.*

145

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

"The game is done! I've won, I've won''," *ship's crew, and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner.*
 Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out : *No twilight within the courts of the sun.* 200
 At one stride comes the dark ;
 With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
 Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up !
 Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
 My life-blood seemed to sip ! 205
 The stars were dim, and thick the night,
 The steersman's face by his lamp
 gleamed white ;

From the sails the dew did drip—
 Till clomb above the eastern bar
 The horned Moon, with one bright star *At the rising of the Moon,* 210
 Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
 Too quick for groan or sigh,
 Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
 And cursed me with his eye. 215

Four times fifty living men,
 (And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
 With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
 They dropped down one by one. *his shipmates, drop down dead;*

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
 They fled to bliss or woe !
 And every soul, it passed me by,
 Like the whizz of my cross-bow !' *but Life-in-Death begins her work on the ancient Mariner.* 220

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

PART THE FOURTH

I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
 I fear thy skinny hand!
 And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
 As is the ribbed sea-sand.

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a spirit is talking to him; 225

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
 And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—
 'Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
 This body dropt not down.

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance. 230

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
 Alone on a wide wide sea!
 And never a saint took pity on
 My soul in agony.

235

The many men, so beautiful!
 And they all dead did lie:
 And a thousand thousand slimy things
 Lived on; and so did I.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
 And drew my eyes away;
 I looked upon the rotting deck,
 And there the dead men lay.

And envieth that they should live, and so many lie dead. 240

I looked to Heaven, and tried to pray;
 But or ever a prayer had gusht,
 A wicked whisper came, and made
 My heart as dry as dust.

245

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
 And the balls like pulses beat;

For the sky and the sea, and the sea and
the sky

250

Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they ;
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

*But the curse
liveth for him
in the eye of
the dead men.*

255

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is a curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that
curse.

260

And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move

265

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt away
A still and awful red.

onward ; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

270

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes :
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

*By the light
of the Moon he
beholdeth God's
creatures of the
great calm.*

275

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire :
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam ; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

280

O happy living things ! no tongue
Their beauty might declare :
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware ;
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

*Their beauty
and their hap-
piness.
He blesseth
them in his
heart.*

285

The selfsame moment I could pray ;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

*The spell
begins to break.*

290

PART THE FIFTH

'Oh sleep ! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole !
To Mary Queen the praise be given !
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

295

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,

*By grace of
the holy Mother,
the ancient*

I dreamt that they were filled with dew ; *Mariner is refreshed with rain.* 300
 And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
 My garments all were dank;
 Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
 And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs : 305
 I was so light—almost
 I thought that I had died in sleep,
 And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind : *He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the element.* 310
 It did not come anear;
 But with its sound it shook the sails,
 That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life !
 And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
 To and fro they were hurried about ! 315
 And to and fro, and in and out,
 The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more
 loud,
 And the sails did sigh like sedge;
 And the rain poured down from one
 black cloud ; 320
 The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and
 still
 The Moon was at its side :

Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide. 325

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan. 330

*The bodies of
the ships' crew
are inspired, and
the ship moves
on;*

They groaned, they stirred, they all
uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved
on; 335

Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless
tools—

We were a ghastly crew. 340

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.'

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!'
'Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corpses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest: 345

*but not by the
souls of the men
nor by demons
of earth or
middle air, but
by a blessed troop
of angelic*

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

For when it dawned—they dropp'd their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

*spirits, sent
down by the
invocation of the
guardian saint.* 350

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun ;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute. 365

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath. 375

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
 From the land of mist and snow,
 The spirit slid : and it was he
 That made the ship to go.
 The sails at noon left off their tune,
 And the ship stood still also.

*The lonesome
 Spirit from the
 South Pole
 carries on the
 ship as far as
 the Line, in
 obedience to the
 angelic troop,
 but still require-
 th vengeance.* 380

The Sun, right up above the mast,
 Had fixed her to the ocean :
 But in a minute she 'gan stir,
 With a short uneasy motion—
 Backwards and forwards half her length
 With a short uneasy motion.

385

Then, like a pawing horse let go,
 She made a sudden bound :
 It flung the blood into my head,
 And I fell down in a swoond.

390

How long in that same fit I lay,
 I have not to declare ;
 But ere my living life returned,
 I heard and in my soul discerned
 Two voices in the air.

*The Polar
 Spirit's fellow-
 demons, the in-
 visible inhabi-
 tants of the ele-
 ment, take part
 in his wrong ;
 and two of them
 relate, one to the
 other, that pe-
 nance long and
 heavy for the an-
 cient Mariner
 hath been ac-
 corded to the Po-
 lar Spirit, who
 returneth south-
 ward.* 395

"Is it he?" quoth one, "Is this the man ?
 By him who died on cross,
 With his cruel bow he laid full low
 The harmless Albatross.

400

"The spirit who bideth by himself
 In the land of mist and snow,
 He loved the bird that loved the man
 Who shot him with his bow."

405

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Or we shall be belated :
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated."

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather :
'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high ;
The dead men stood together.

The super-
natural motion
is retarded; the
Mariner awakes
and his penance
begins anew.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter :
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they
died,
Had never passed away :
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

440

And now this spell was snapt: once
more

*The curse is
finally expiated.*

I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

445

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head ;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

450

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
 Nor sound nor motion made :
 Its path was not upon the sea,
 In ripple or in shade.

455

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
 Like a meadow-gale of spring—
 It mingled strangely with my fears,
 Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
 Yet she sailed softly too :
 Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
 On me alone it blew.

460

Oh ! dream of joy ! is this indeed
 The lighthouse top I see ?
 Is this the hill ? is this the kirk ?
 Is this mine own countree ?

*And the ancient
 Mariner behold—
 eth his native
 country.* 465

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
 And I with sobs did pray—
 'O let me be awake, my God !
 Or let me sleep alway.'

470

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
 So smoothly it was strewn !
 And on the bay the moonlight lay,
 And the shadow of the Moon.

475

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
 That stands above the rock :
 The moonlight steeped in silentness
 The steady weathercock.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

*The angelic
spirits leave the
dead bodies, and
appear in their
own forms
of light.*

480

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were :
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ ! what saw I there !

485

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood !
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

490

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
It was a heavenly sight !
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light ;

495

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice ; but oh ! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer :
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

500

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast :
Dear Lord in Heaven ! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

505

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

‘Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—’
(The Pilot made reply)
‘I am a-feared’—‘Push on, push on!’
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard. 545

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread :
It reached the ship, it split the bay ;
The ship went down like lead.

[illegible]

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the
while
His eyes went to and fro.
"Ha! ha!" quoth he, "full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row."

And now, all in my own countree, 570
I stood on the firm land !
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

"O shrive me, shrive me, holy man!"
The Hermit crossed his brow.
"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee
say—
What manner of man art thou?"

*The ancient
Mariner earn-
estly entreateth
the Hermit to
shrive him;
and the penance
of life falls on
him.*

575

Forthwith this frame of mine was
wrenched
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free. 580

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns,
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me;
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that
 door !
The wedding-guests are there :
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are :
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer !

595

O Wedding-Guest ! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea :
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.' 615

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest 620
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn. 625

LORD BYRON

ODE TO NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE

I

'Tis done—but yesterday a King!
And arm'd with Kings to strive—
And now thou art a nameless thing:
So abject—yet alive!
Is this the man of thousand thrones, 5
Who strewed our earth with hostile bones,
And can he thus survive?
Since he, miscalled the Morning Star,
Nor man nor fiend hath fallen so far. .

II

Ill-minded man! why scourge thy kind 10
Who bowed so low the knee?
By gazing on thyself grown blind,
Thou taught'st the rest to see.
With might unquestioned,—power to save,—
Thine only gift hath been the grave, 15
To those that worshipped thee;
Nor till thy fall could mortals guess
Ambition's less than littleness!

III

Thanks for that lesson—It will teach
To after-warriors more, 20
Than high Philosophy can preach,
And vainly preached before.
That spell upon the minds of men
Breaks never to unite again,

That led them to adore 25
 Those Pagod things of sabre sway
 With fronts of brass, and feet of clay.

IV

The triumph and the vanity,
 The rapture of the strife—
 The earthquake voice of Victory, 30
 To thee the breath of life;
 The sword, the sceptre, and that sway
 Which man seemed made but to obey,
 Wherewith renown was rife—
 All quelled!—Dark Spirit! what must be 35
 The madness of thy memory!

V

The Desolator desolate!
 The Victor overthrown!
 The Arbiter of other's fate
 A Suppliant for his own! 40
 Is it some yet imperial hope
 That with such change can calmly cope?
 Or dread of death alone?
 To die a prince—or live a slave—
 The choice is most ignobly brave! 45

VI

He who of old would rend the oak,
 Dreamed not of the rebound:
 Chained by the trunk he vainly broke—
 Alone—how looked he round?
 Thou, in the sternness of thy strength, 50
 An equal deed hast done at length,

And darker fate hast found :
 He fell, the forest prowlers' pray ;
 But thou must eat thy heart away !

VII

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| The Roman, when his burning heart | 55 |
| Was slaked with blood of Rome, | |
| Threw down the dagger—dared depart, | |
| In savage grandeur, home— | |
| He dared depart in utter scorn | |
| Of men that such a yoke had borne, | 60 |
| Yet left him such a doom ! | |
| His only glory was that hour | |
| Of self-upheld abandoned power. | |

VIII

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| The Spaniard, when the lust of sway | |
| Had lost its quickening spell, | 65 |
| Cast crowns for rosaries away, | |
| An empire for a cell ; | |
| A strict accountant of his beads, | |
| A subtle disputant on creeds, | |
| His dotage trifled well : | 70 |
| Yet better had he neither known | |
| A bigot's shire, nor despot's throne. | |

IX

| | |
|--|----|
| But thou—from the reluctant hand | |
| The thunderbolt is wrung— | |
| Too late thou leav'st the high command | 75 |
| To which thy weakness clung ; | |
| All Evil Spirit as thou art, | |
| It is enough to grieve the heart | |

To see thine own unstrung;
 To think that God's fair world hath been 80
 The footstool of a thing so mean;

X

And Earth hath spilt her blood for him,
 Who thus can hoard his own!
 And Monarchs bow'd the trembling limb,
 And thanked him for a throne! 85
 Fair Freedom! we may hold thee dear,
 When thus thy mightiest foes their fear
 In humblest guise have shown.
 Oh! ne'er may tyrant leave behind
 A brighter name to lure mankind! 90

XI

Thine evil deeds are writ in gore,
 Nor written thus in vain—
 Thy triumphs tell of fame no more,
 Or deepen every stain:
 If thou hadst died as honour dies, 95
 Some new Napoleon might arise,
 To shame the world again—
 But who would soar the solar height,
 To set in such a starless night?

XII

Weighed in the balance, hero dust 100
 Is vile as vulgar clay;
 The scales, Mortality! are just
 To all that pass away!
 But yet methought the living great
 Some higher sparks should animate, 105

To dazzle and dismay :
 Nor deemed Contempt could thus make mirth
 Of these, the Conquerors of the earth.

XIII

And she, proud Austria's mournful flower,
 Thy still imperial bride; 110
 How bears her breast the torturing hour?
 Still clings she to thy side?
 Must she too bend, must she too share
 Thy late repentance, long despair,
 Thou throneless Homicide? 115
 If still she loves thee, hoard that gem,—
 'Tis worth thy vanished diadem!

XIV

Then haste thee to thy sullen Isle,
 And gaze upon the sea;
 That element may meet thy smile— 120
 It ne'er was ruled by thee!
 Or trace with thine all idle hand
 In loitering mood upon the sand
 That Earth is now as free!
 That Corinth's pedagogue hath now 125
 Transferred his by-word to thy brow.

XV

Thou Timour! in his captive's cage
 What thoughts will there be thine,
 While brooding in thy prisoned rage?
 But one—'The world *was* mine!' 130
 Unless, like he of Babylon,
 All sense is with thy sceptre gone,

Life will not long confine
 That spirit poured so widely forth—
 So long obeyed—so little worth ! 135

XVI

Or, like the thief of fire from heaven,
 Wilt thou withstand the shock ?
 And share with him, the unforgiven,
 His vulture and his rock !
 Foredoomed by God—by man accurst, 140
 And that last act, though not thy worst,
 The very Fiend's arch mock ;
 He in his fall preserved his pride,
 And, if a mortal, had as proudly died !

XVII

There was a day—there was an hour, 145
 While earth was Gaul's—Gaul thine—
 When that immeasurable power
 Unsated to resign
 Had been an act of purer fame
 Than gathers round Marengo's name, 150
 And gilded thy decline,
 Through the long twilight of all time,
 Despite some passing clouds of crime.

XVIII

But thou forsooth must be a king,
 And don the purple vest, 155
 As if that foolish robe could wring
 Remembrance from thy breast.
 Where is that faded garment ? where
 The gewgaws thou wert fond to wear,

The star, the string, the crest? 160
 Vain froward child of empire; say,
 Are all thy playthings snatched away?

XIX

Where may the wearied eye repose
 When gazing on the Great;
 Where neither guilty glory glows, 165
 Nor despicable state?
 Yes—one—the first—the last—the best—
 The Cincinnatus of the West,
 Whom envy dared not hate,
 Bequeathed the name of Washington, 170
 To make man blush there was but one!

FROM 'CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE'

WATERLOO

Canto III. Stanzas XXI-XXVIII.

THERE was a sound of revelry by night,
And Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell, 5
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell;
But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising
knell!

Did ye not hear it?—No; 'twas but the wind, 10
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;
On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet
To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet—
But hark!—that heavy sound breaks in once more, 15
As if the clouds its echo would repeat;
And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before!
Arm! Arm! it is—it is—the cannon's opening roar!

Within a windowed niche of that high hall
Sate Brunswick's fated chieftain; he did hear 20
That sound the first amidst the festival,
And caught its tone with Death's prophetic ear;
'And when they smiled because he deemed it near
His heart more truly knew that peal too well,

Which stretched his father on a bloody bier, 25
 And roused the vengeance blood alone could quell;
 He rushed into the field, and, foremost fighting fell.

Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
 And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,
 And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago 30
 Blushed at the praise of their own loveliness;
 And there were sudden partings, such as press
 The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
 Which ne'er might be repeated; who could guess
 If ever more should meet those mutual eyes, 35
 Since upon night so sweet such awful morn could rise!

And there was mounting in hot haste: the steed,
 The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
 Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
 And swiftly forming in the ranks of war; 40
 And the deep thunder peal on peal afar;
 And near, the beat of the alarming drum
 Roused up the soldier ere the morning star;
 While thronged the citizens with terror dumb,
 Or whispering, with white lips—'The foe! they come!
 they come!' 45

And wild and high the 'Cameron's gathering' rose!
 The war-note of Lochiel, which Albyn's hills
 Have heard, and heard, too, have her Saxon foes:—
 How in the noon of night that pibroch thrills,
 Savage and shrill! But with the breath which fills 50
 Their mountain-pipe, so fill the mountaineers
 With the fierce native daring which instils
 The stirring memory of a thousand years,
 And Evan's, Donald's fame rings in each clansman's
 ears! ,

And Ardennes waves above them her green leaves, 55
 Dewy with nature's tear-drops as they pass,
 Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,
 Over the unreturning brave,—alas!
 Ere evening to be trodden like the grass
 Which now beneath them, but above shall grow 60
 In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
 Of living valour, rolling on the foe
 And burning with high hope, should moulder cold and
 low.

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
 Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay, 65
 The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
 The morn the marshalling in arms,—the day
 Battle's magnificently stern array!
 The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent
 The earth is covered thick with other clay, 70
 Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
 Rider and horse,—friend, foe,—in one red burial blent!

VENICE

Canto IV. Stanzas I-III.

I STOOD in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs ;
A palace and a prison on each hand :
I saw from out the wave her structures rise 75
As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand :
A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying Glory smiles
O'er the far times, when many a subject land
Looked to the winged Lion's marble piles, 80
Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred
isles !

She looks a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean,
'Rising with her tiara of proud towers
At airy distance, with majestic motion,
A ruler of the waters and their powers : 85
And such she was ;—her daughters had their dowers
From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East
Poured in her lap all gems in sparkling showers.
In purple was she robed, and of her feast
Monarchs partook, and deemed their dignity increased. 90

In Venice Tasso's echoes are no more,
And silent rows the songless gondolier :
Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,
And music meets not always now the ear :
Those days are gone—but Beauty still is here. 95
States fall, arts fade—but Nature doth not die,
Nor yet forget how Venice once was dear,
The pleasant place of all festivity,
The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy !

THE OCEAN

Canto IV. Stanzas CLXXVIII-CLXXXIV

THERE is a pleasure in the pathless woods, 100
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar :
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal 105
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll !
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain : 110
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore ; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain, 115
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths,—thy fields,
Are not a spoil for him,—thou dost arise
And shake him from thee ; the vile strength he wields 120
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his Gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth :—there let him

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
 Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,
 And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
 The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make 130
 Their clay creator the vain title take
 Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war—
 These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
 They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
 Alike the Armada's pride or spoils of Trafalgar. 135

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee—
 Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?
 Thy waters washed them power while they were free,
 And many a tyrant since; their shores obey
 The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay 140
 Has dried up realms to deserts:—not so thou;—
 Unchangeable, save to thy wild waves' play,
 Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow:
 Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form 145
 Glasses itself in tempest; in all time,—
 Calm or convulsed, in breeze, or gale, or storm,
 Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
 Dark-heaving—boundless, endless, and sublime,
 The image of eternity, the throne 150
 Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
 The monsters of the deep are made; each zone
 Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy 155
 Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
 Borne, like thy bubbles, onward: from a boy
 I wanton'd with thy breakers—they to me

Were a delight : and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror—'t was a pleasing fear,
For I was as it were a child of thee,
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane—as I do here.

160

ROME

Canto IV. Stanzas LXXVIII-LXXXI,
and Stanzas CVII-CX.

OH Rome! my country! city of the soul!
The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
Lone mother of dead empires! and control 165
In their shut breasts their petty misery.
What are our woes and sufferance? Come and see
The cypress, hear the owl, and plod your way
O'er steps of broken thrones and temples, Ye!
Whose agonies are evils of a day— 170
A world is at our feet as fragile as our clay.

The Niobe of nations! there she stands,
Childless and crownless, in her voiceless woe;
An empty urn within her wither'd hands,
Whose holy dust was scatter'd long ago; 175
The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now;
The very sepulchres lie tenantless
Of their heroic dwellers: dost thou flow,
Old Tiber! through a marble wilderness?
Rise, with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress. 180

The Goth, the Christian, Time, War, Flood, and
Fire,
Have dealt upon the seven-hill'd city's pride;
She saw her glories star by star expire,
And up the steep barbarian monarchs ride,
Where the Car climb'd the Capitol; far and wide 185
Temple and tower went down, nor left a site:
Chaos of ruins! who shall trace the void,
O'er the dim fragments cast a lunar light.
And say, "here was, or is," where all is doubly night?

The double night of ages, and of her, 190
 Night's daughter, Ignorance, hath wrapt and wrap
 All round us : we but feel our way to err :
 The ocean hath its chart, the stars their map,
 And knowledge spreads them on her ample lap ;
 But Rome is as the desert, where we steer 195
 Stumbling o'er recollections ; now we clap
 Our hands, and cry "Eureka !" it is clear—
 When but some false mirage of ruin rises near.

Cypress and ivy, weed and wallflower grown
 Matted and mass'd together, hillocks heap'd 200
 On what were chambers, arch crush'd, column strown
 In fragments, choked up vaults, and frescos steep'd
 In subterranean damp, where the owl peep'd,
 Deeming it midnight :—Temples, baths, or halls ?
 Pronounce who can ; for all that Learning reap'd 205
 From her research hath been, that these are walls—
 Behold the Imperial Mount ! 'tis thus the mighty falls.

There is the moral of all human tales ;
 'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past,
 First Freedom, and then Glory—when that fails, 210
 Wealth, vice, corruption,—barbarism at last.
 And History, with all her volumes vast,
 Hath but one page,—'tis better written here
 Where gorgeous Tyranny hath thus amass'd
 All treasures, all delights, that eye or ear, 215
 Heart, soul could seek, tongue ask—Away with words !
 draw near,

Admire, exult, despise, laugh, weep,—for here
 There is such matter for all feeling :—Man !
 Thou pendulum betwixt a smile and tear,

Ages and realms are crowded in this span, 220
 This mountain, whose obliterated plan
 The pyramid of empires pinnacled,
 Of Glory's gewgaws shining in the van
 Till the sun's rays with added flame were fill'd!
 Where are its golden roofs? where those who dared to
 build? 225

Tully was not so eloquent as thou,
 Thou nameless column with the buried base!
 What are the laurels of the Caesar's brow?
 Crown me with ivy from his dwelling place.
 Whose arch or pillar meets me in the face, 230
 Titus or Trajan's? No—'tis that of Time:
 Triumph, arch, pillar, all he doth displace
 Scoffing; and apostolic statues climb
 To crush the imperial urn, whose ashes slept sublime.

JOHN KEATS

TO A NIGHTINGALE

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk;
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thy happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

5

10

O for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

15

20

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;

25

Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow. 30

Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :
Already with thee ! tender is the night, 35
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays ;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy
ways. 40

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ; 45
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;
Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves ;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves. 50

Darkling I listen ; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath ;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die, 55
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy !

Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
 To thy high requiem become a sod. 60

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !
 No hungry generations tread thee down ;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown :
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path 65
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn. 70

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self !
 Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well
 As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf.
 Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades 75
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
 Up the hill-side ; and now 'tis buried deep
 In the next valley-glades :
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?
 Fled is that music :—do I wake or sleep ? 80

ISABELLA, OR THE POT OF BASIL

A STORY, FROM BOCCACCIO

I

FAIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel!

Lorenzo, a youg palmer in Love's eye!
They could not in the self-same mansion dwell

Without some stir of heart, some malady;
They could not sit at meals but feel how well 5

It soothed each to be the other by;
They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep,
But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

II

With every morn their love grew tenderer,
With every eve deeper and tenderer still; 10

He might not in house, field, or garden stir
But her full shape would all his seeing fill;
And his continual voice was pleasanter

To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill;
Her lute-string gave an echo of his name, 15
She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same.

III

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch,
Before the door had given her to his eyes;
And from her chamber-window he would catch

Her beauty farther than the falcon spies; 20
And constant as her vespers would he watch,

Because her face was turned to the same skies;
And with sick longing all the night outwear,
To hear her morning-step upon the stair.

V

VI

VII

132

If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed
 To every symbol on his forehead high;
 She saw it waxing very pale and dead,
 And straight all flushed; so, lisped tenderly,
 'Lorenzo!'—here she ceased her timid quest, 55
 But in her tone and look he read the rest.

VIII

'O Isabella! I can half perceive
 That I may speak my grief into thine ear;
 If thou didst ever anything believe,
 Believe how I love thee, believe how near 60
 My soul is to its doom: I would not grieve
 Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear
 Thine eyes by gazing; but I cannot live
 Another night, and not my passion shrive.

IX

'Love! thou art leading me from wintry cold, 65
 Lady! thou leadest me to summer clime,
 And I must taste the blossoms that unfold
 In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time.'
 So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,
 And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme: 70
 Great bliss was with them, and great happiness
 Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress.

X

Parting they seemed to tread upon the air,
 Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart
 Only to meet again more close, and share 75
 The inward fragrance of each other's heart.
 She, to her chamber gone, a ditty fair

Sang, of delicious love and honeyed dart;
 He with light steps went up a western hill,
 And bade the sun farewell, and joyed his fill. 80

XI

All close they met again, before the dusk
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
 And close they met, all eves, before the dusk
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
 Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk, 85
 Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.
 Ah! better had it been for ever so,
 Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe.

XII

Were they unhappy then?—It cannot be—
 Too many tears for lovers have been shed, 90
 Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
 Too much of pity after they are dead,
 Too many doleful stories do we see,
 Whose matter in bright gold were best be read;
 Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse 95
 Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

XIII

But, for the general award of love,
 The little sweet doth kill much bitterness;
 Though Dido silent is in under-grove,
 And Isabella's was a great distress, 100
 Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove
 Was not embalmed, this truth is not the less—
 Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers,
 Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

XIV

| | |
|---|-----|
| With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt, | 105 |
| Enriched from ancestral merchandise, | |
| And for them many a weary hand did swelt | |
| In torched mines and noisy factories, | |
| And many once proud-quivered loins did melt | |
| In blood from stinging whip; with hollow eyes | 110 |
| Many all day in dazzling river stood, | |
| To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood. | |

XV

| | |
|---|-----|
| For them the Ceylon diver held his breath, | |
| And went all naked to the hungry shark; | |
| For them his ears gushed blood; for them in death | 115 |
| The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark | |
| Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe | |
| A thousand men in troubles wide and dark: | |
| Half-ignorant, they turned an easy wheel, | |
| That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel. | 120 |

XVI

| | |
|--|-----|
| Why were they proud? Because their marble founts | |
| Gushed with more pride than do a wretch's tears? | |
| Why were they proud? Because fair orange-mounts | |
| Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs? | |
| Why were they proud? Because red-lined accounts | 125 |
| Were richer than the songs of Grecian years? | |
| Why were they proud? again we ask aloud, | |
| Why in the name of glory were they proud? | |

XVII

| | |
|--|-----|
| Yet were these Florentines as self-retired | |
| In hungry pride and gainful cowardice, | 130 |

As two close Hebrews in that land inspired,
 Paled in and vineyarded from beggar-spies;
 The hawks of ship-mast forests—the untired
 And panniered mules for ducats and old lies—
 Quick cat's paws on the generous stray-away,— 135
 Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.

XVIII

How was it these same ledger-men could spy
 Fair Isabella in her downy nest?
 How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye
 A straying from his toil? Hot Egypt's pest 140
 Into their vision covetous and sly!
 How could these money-bags see east and west?
 Yet so they did—and every dealer fair
 Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

XIX

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio! 145
 Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon,
 And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow,
 And of thy roses amorous of the moon,
 And of thy lilies, that do paler grow
 Now they can no more hear thy ghittern's tune, 150
 For venturing syllables that ill beseem
 The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

XX

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale
 Shall move on soberly, as it is meet;
 There is no other crime, no mad assail 155
 To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet:
 But it is done—succeed the verse or fail—

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet;
To stead thee as a verse in English tongue,
An echo of thee in the north-wind sung. 160

XXI

These brethren having found by many signs
What love Lorenzo for their sister had,
And how she loved him too, each unconfines
His bitter thoughts to other, well-nigh mad
That he, the servant of their trade designs, 165
Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,
When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees
To some high noble and his olive-trees.

XXII

And many a jealous conference had they,
And many times they bit their lips alone, 170
Before they fixed upon a surest way
To make the youngster for his crime atone;
And at the last, these men of cruel clay
Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone;
For they resolved in some forest dim 175
To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

XXIII

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant
Into the sun-rise, o'er the balustrade
Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent
Their footing through the dews; and to him said, 180
'You seem there in the quiet of content,
Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade
Calm speculation; but if you are wise,
Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

XXIV

'To-day we purpose, ay, this hour we mount 185
 To spur three leagues towards the Apennine;
Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count
 His dewy rosary on the eglantine.'
Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,
 Bowed a fair greeting to these serpents' whine, 190
And went in haste, to get in readiness,
With belt, and spur, and bracing huntsman's dress.

XXV

And as he to the court-yard passed along,
Each third step did he pause, and listened oft
If he could hear his lady's matin-song,
Or the light whisper of her footstep soft;
And as he thus over his passion hung,
He heard a laugh full musical aloft;
When, looking up, he saw her features bright
Smile through an in-door lattice all delight.

XX·VI

'Love, Isabel!' said he, 'I was in pain
Lest I should miss to bid thee a good morrow :
Ah! what if I should lose thee, when so fain
I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow
Of a poor three hours' absence? but we'll gain . . . 205
Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow.
Good bye! I'll soon be back.'—'Good bye!' said she :
And as he went she chanted merrily.

XXVII

So the two brothers and their murdered man
Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's stream 210

Gurgles through straitened banks, and still doth fan
 Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream
 Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan
 The brothers' faces in the ford did seem,
 Lorenzo's flush with love. They passed the water 215
 Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

XXVIII

There was Lorenzo slain and buried in,
 There in that forest did his great love cease;
 Ah! when a soul doth thus its freedom win,
 It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace 220
 As the break-covert blood-hounds of such sin:
 They dipped their swords in the water, and did tease
 Their horses homeward, with convulsed spur,
 Each richer by his being a murderer.

XXIX

They told their sister how, with sudden speed, 225
 Lorenzo had ta'en ship for foreign lands,
 Because of some great urgency and need
 In their affairs, requiring trusty hands.
 Poor girl! put on thy stifling widow's weed,
 And 'scape at once from Hope's accursed bands: 230
 To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,
 And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

XXX

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be;
 Sorely she wept until the night came on,
 And then, instead of love, O misery! 235
 She brooded o'er the luxury alone:
 His image in the dusk she seemed to see,

And to the silence made a gentle moan,
 Spreading her perfect arms upon the air,
 And on her couch low murmuring, 'Where? O where?' 240

XXXI

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long
 Its fiery vigil in her single breast;
 She fretted for the golden hour, and hung
 Upon the time with feverish unrest—
 Not long; for soon into her heart a throng 245
 Of higher occupants, a richer zest,
 Came tragic; passion not to be subdued,
 And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

XXXII

In the mid days of autumn, on their eves
 The breath of Winter comes from far away, 250
 And the sick west continually bereaves
 Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay
 Of death among the bushes and the leaves,
 To make all bare before he dares to stray
 From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel 255
 By gradual decay from beauty fell.

XXXIII

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes
 She asked her brothers, with an eye all pale,
 Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes
 Could keep him off so long? They spake a tale • 260
 Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes
 Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's vale;
 And every night in dreams they groaned aloud,
 To see their sister in her snowy shroud.

XXXIV

And she had died in drowsy ignorance, 265
 But for a thing more deadly dark than all;
 It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance,
 Which saves a sick man from the feathered pall
 For some few gasping moments; like a lance,
 Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall 270
 With cruel pierce, and bringing him again
 Sense of gnawing fire at heart and brain.

XXXV

It was a vision. In the drowsy gloom,
 The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot
 Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb 275
 Had marred his glossy hair which once could shoot
 Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom
 Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
 From his lorn voice, and past his loamed ears
 Had made a miry channel for his tears. 280

XXXVI

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake:
 For there was striving, in its piteous tongue,
 To speak as when on earth it was awake,
 And Isabella on its music hung:
 Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake, 285
 As in a palsied Druid's harp unstrung;
 And through it moaned a ghostly under-song,
 Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral briars among.

XXXVII

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright
 With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof 290

From the poor girl by magic of their light,
 The while it did unthread the horrid woof
 Of the late darkened time—the murderous spite
 Of pride and avarice—the dark pine roof
 In the forest—and the sodden turfed dell, 295
 Where, without any word, from stabs he fell.

XXXVIII

Saying moreover, 'Isabel, my sweet !
 Red whortle-berries droop above my head,
 And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet ;
 Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed 300
 Their leaves and prickly-nuts ; a sheep-fold bleat
 Comes from beyond the river to my bed :
 Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,
 And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

XXXIX

'I am a shadow now, alas ! alas ! 305
 Upon the skirts of human nature dwelling
 Alone : I chant alone the holy mass,
 While little sounds of life are round me kneeling,
 And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,
 And many a chapel bell the hour is telling, 310
 Paining me through : those sounds grow strange to
 me,
 And thou art distant in Humanity.

XL

'I know what was, I feel full well what is,
 And I should rage, if spirits could go mad ;
 Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss, 315
 That paleness warms my grave, as though I had

A seraph chosen from the bright abyss
 To be my spouse: thy paleness makes me glad:
 Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel
 A greater love through all my essence steal.' 320

XLI

The Spirit mourned 'Adieu!'—dissolved, and left
 The atom darkness in a slow turmoil;
 As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,
 Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,
 We put our eyes into a pillow cleft, 325
 And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil;
 It made sad Isabella's eyelids ache,
 And in the dawn she started up awake;

XLII

'Ha! ha!' said she, 'I knew not this hard life,
 I thought the worst was simple misery; 330
 I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife
 Portioned us—happy days, or else to die;
 But there is crime—a brother's bloody knife!
 Sweet Spirit, thou hast schooled my infancy:
 I'll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes, 335
 And greet thee morn and even in the skies.'

XLIII

When the full morning came, she had devised
 How she might secret to the forest hie;
 How she might find the clay, so dearly prized,
 And sing to it one latest lullaby; 340
 How her short absence might be unsurmised,
 While she the inmost of the dream would try.
 Resolved, she took with her an aged nurse,
 And went into that dismal forest-hearse.

XLIV

See, as they creep along the river side,
How she doth whisper to that aged dame,
And, after looking round the champaign wide,
Shows her a knife.—‘What feverous hectic flame
Burns in thee, child?—what good can thee betide
That thou shouldst smile again?’—The evening
came,
And they had found Lorenzo’s earthly bed;
The flint was there, the berries at his head.

XLV

Who hath not loitered in a green church-yard,
 And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,
 Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,
 To see the skull, coffined bones, and funeral stole;
 Pitying each form that hungry Death had marred,
 And filling it once more with human soul?
 Ah! this is holiday to what was felt
 When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt.

XLVI

She gazed into the fresh-thrown mould, as though
One glance did fully all its secrets tell;
Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know
Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well;
Upon the murderous spot she seemed to grow,
Like to a native lily of the dell :
Then with her knife, all sudden she began
To dig more fervently than misers can.

XLVII

Soon she turned up a soiled glove, whereon
 Her silk had played in purple phantasies;

She kissed it with a lip more chill than stone,
 And put it in her bosom, where it dries
 And freezes utterly unto the bone
 Those dainties made to still an infant's cries :
 Then 'gan she work again ; nor stayed her care, 375
 But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

XLVIII

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,
 Until her heart felt pity to the core
 At sight of such a dismal labouring,
 And so she kneeled, with her locks all hoar, 380
 And put her lean hand to the horrid thing :
 Three hours they laboured at this travail sore ;
 At last they felt the kernel of the grave,
 And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

XLIX

Ah ! wherefore all this wormy circumstance ? 385
 Why linger at the yawning tomb so long ?
 O for the gentleness of old Romance,
 The simple plaining of a minstrel's song !
 Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,
 For here, in truth, it doth not well belong 390
 To speak :—O turn thee to the very tale,
 And taste the music of that vision pale.

L

With duller steel than the Perséan sword
 They cut away no formless monster's head,
 But one, whose gentleness did well accord 395
 With death, as life. The ancient harps have said,
 Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord :

It may not be—those Baälites of pelf,
 Her brethren, noted the continual shower
 From her dead eyes; and many a curious elf,
 Among her kindred, wondered that such dower
 Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside 455
 By one marked out to be a Noble's bride.

LVIII

And, furthermore, her brethren wondered much
 Why she sat drooping by the Basil green,
 And why it flourished, as by magic touch;
 Greatly they wondered what the thing might mean : 460
 They could not surely give belief, that such
 A very nothing would have power to wean
 Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay,
 And even remembrance of her love's delay.

LIX

Therefore they watched a time when they might sift 465
 This hidden whim; and long they watched in vain;
 For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift,
 And seldom felt she any hunger-pain :
 And when she left, she hurried back, as swift
 As bird on wing to breast its eggs again : 470
 And, patient as a hen-bird, sat her there
 Beside her Basil, weeping through her hair.

LX

Yet they contrived to steal the Basil-pot,
 And to examine it in secret place :
 The thing was vile with green and livid spot, 475
 And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face :
 The guerdon of their murder they had got,
 And so left Florence in a moment's space,

Never to turn again.—Away they went,
With blood upon their heads, to banishment. 480

LXI

O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away !
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly !
O Echo, Echo, on some other day,
From isles Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh !
Spirits of grief, sing not your 'Well-a-way !' 485
For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die ;
Will die a death too lone and incomplete,
Now they have ta'en away her Basil sweet.

LXII

Piteous she looked on dead and senseless things,
Asking for her lost Basil amorously : 490
And with melodious chuckle in the strings
Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry
After the Pilgrim in his wanderings,
To ask him where her Basil was ; and why
'twas hid from her : 'For cruel 'tis,' said she, 495
'To steal my Basil-pot away from me.'

LXIII

And so she pined, and so she died forlorn,
Imploring for her Basil to the last.
No heart was there in Florence but did mourn
In pity of her love, so overcast. 500
And a sad ditty of this story borne
From mouth to mouth through all the country
passed :
Still is the burthen sung—'O cruelty,
To steal my Basil-pot away from me !'

THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

I

ST. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers while he told 5
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seemed taking flight for heaven without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he
saith.

II

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man; 10
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan.
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptured dead, on each side seem to freeze,
Emprisoned in black, purgatorial rails: 15
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

III

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere music's golden tongue 20
Flattered to tears this aged man and poor.
But no—already had his death-bell rung;
The joys of all his life were said and sung;
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:

Another way he went, and soon among 25
 Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
 And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

IV

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
 And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
 From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft, 30
 The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
 The level chambers, ready with their pride,
 Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
 The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
 Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests, 35
 With hair blown back, and wings put crosswise on
 their breasts.

V

At length burst in the argent revelry,
 With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
 Numerous as shadows haunting faerily
 The brain new-stuffed, in youth, with triumphs gay 40
 Of old romance. These let us wish away,
 And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
 Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
 On love, and winged St. Agnes' saintly care,
 As she had heard old dames full many times declare. 45

VI

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
 Young virgins might have visions of delight,
 And soft adorings from their loves receive
 Upon the honeyed middle of the night,
 If ceremonies due they did aright: 50
 As, supperless to bed they must retire,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

VII

| | |
|---|----|
| Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline : | 55 |
| The music, yearning like a God in pain, | |
| She scarcely heard : her maiden eyes divine, | |
| Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train | |
| Pass by—she heeded not at all : in vain | |
| Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier, | 60 |
| And back retired ; not cooled by high disdain, | |
| But she saw not : her heart was elsewhere ; | |
| She sighed for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year. | |

VIII

| | |
|---|----|
| She danced along with vague, regardless eyes, | |
| Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short : | 65 |
| The hallowed hour was near at hand, she sighs | |
| Amid the timbrels, and the thronged resort | |
| Of whispers in anger or in sport ; | |
| 'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn, | |
| Hoodwinked with faery fancy : all amort, | 70 |
| Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn, | |
| And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn. | |

IX

| | |
|--|----|
| So, purposing each moment to retire, | |
| She lingered still. Meantime, across the moors, | |
| Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire | 75 |
| For Madeline. Beside the portal doors, | |
| Buttressed from moonlight, stands he, and implores | |
| All saints to give him sight of Madeline, | |

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen; 80
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such
things have been.

X

He ventures in : let no buzz'd whisper tell,
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel :
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes, 85
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execration howl
Against his lineage : not one breast affords
Him any mercy in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul. 90

XI

Ah, happy chance ! The aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland.

95

He startled her : but soon she knew his face,
And grasped his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, 'Mercy, Porphyro ! hie thee from this place ;
They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race !

XII

'Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand: 100
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his grey hairs—Alas me! flit!

Flit like a ghost away.'—'Ah, Gossip dear, 105
 We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,
 And tell me how'—'Good Saints! not here, not here;
 Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier.'

XIII

He followed through a lowly arched way,
 Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume; 110
 And as she muttered 'Well-a—well-a-day!'
 He found him in a little moonlight room,
 Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
 'Now tell me where is Madeline,' said he,
 'O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom 115
 Which none but secret sisterhood may see
 When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously.'

XIV

'St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
 Yet men will murder upon holy days.
 Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve, 120
 And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays
 To venture so: it fills me with amaze
 To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!
 God's help! my lady fair the conjurer plays
 This very night: good angels her deceive! 125
 But let me laugh awhile,—I've mickle time to grieve.'

XV

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
 While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
 Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
 Who keepeth closed a wondrous riddle-book, 130
 As spectacted she sits in chimney nook.

But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
 His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook
 Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
 And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old. 135

XVI

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
 Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
 Made purple riot: then doth he propose
 A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
 'A cruel man and impious thou art: 140
 Sweet lady! let her pray, and sleep and dream
 Alone with her good angels, far apart
 From wicked men like thee. Go, go! I deem
 Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst
 seem.'

XVII

'I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,' 145
 Quoth Prophyro: 'O may I ne'er find grace
 When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer
 If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
 Or look with ruffian passion in her face.
 Good Angela, believe me, by these tears; 150
 Or I will, even in a moment's space,
 Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
 And beard them, though they be more fanged than
 wolves and bears.'

XVIII

'Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
 A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing, 155
 Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;

Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
 Were never missed.' Thus plaining, doth she bring
 A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
 So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing, 160
 That Angela gives promise she will do
 Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

XIX

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
 Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
 Him in a closet, of such privacy 165
 That he might see her beauty unespied,
 And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
 While legioned fairies paced the coverlet,
 And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
 Never on such a night have lovers met, 170
 Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

XX

'It shall be as thou wishest,' said the Dame:
 'All cates and dainties shall be stored there
 Quickly on this feast-night; by the tambour frame
 Her own Lute thou wilt see: no time to spare, 175
 For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
 On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
 Wait here, my child, with patience kneel in prayer
 The while. Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
 Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.' 180

XXI

So saying she hobbled off with busy fear.
 The lover's endless minutes slowly passed;
 The dame returned, and whispered in his ear

To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
 From fright of dim espial. Safe at last 185
 Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
 The maiden's chamber, silken, hushed and chaste;
 Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.
 His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

XXII

Her faltering hand upon the balustrade, 190
 Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
 When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
 Rose, like a missioned spirit, unaware;
 With silver taper's light, and pious care,
 She turned, and down the aged gossip led 195
 To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
 Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
 She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove frayed and
 fled.

XXIII

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
 Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died: 200
 She closed the door, she panted, all akin
 To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
 Nor uttered syllable, or, woe betide!
 But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
 Paining with eloquence her balmy side; 205
 As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
 Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

XXIV

A casement high and triple-arched there was,
 All garlanded with carven imageries,

Of fruits and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass, 210
 And diamond with panes of quaint device,
 Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
 As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings;
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings, 215
 A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and
 kings.

XXV

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
 And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
 As down she knelt for Heaven's grace and boon;
 Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest, 220
 And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
 And on her hair a glory, like a saint :
 She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,
 Save wings, for heaven :—Porphyro grew faint :
 She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint. 225

XXVI

Anon his heart revives : her vespers done,
 Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
 Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one,
 Loosens her fragrant bodice ; by degrees
 Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees : 230
 Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
 Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
 In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
 But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

XXVII

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
 In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay, 235

Until the popped warmth of sleep oppressed
 Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;
 Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
 Blissfully havened both from joy and pain; 240
 Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray;
 Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
 As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

XXVIII

Stolen to this paradise, and so entranced,
 Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress, 245
 And listened to her breathing, if it chanced
 To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
 Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
 And breathed himself: then from the closet crept,
 Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness, 250
 And over the hushed carpet, silent, stopt,
 And 'tween the curtains peeped, where, lo!—how fast
 she slept!

XXIX

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
 Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
 A table, and, half anguished, threw thereon 255
 A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—
 O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!
 The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
 The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
 Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:— 260
 The half-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

XXX

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep
 In blanched linen, smooth, and lavendered,

While he from forth the closet brought a heap
 Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd; 265
 With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
 And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
 Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
 From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
 From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon. 270

XXXI

These delicacies he heaped with glowing hand
 On golden dishes and in baskets bright
 Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
 In the retired quiet of the night,
 Filling the chilly room with perfume light.— 275
 'And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
 Thou art my heaven, and I thine hermit:
 Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
 Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.'

XXXII

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm 280
 Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
 By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm
 Impossible to melt as iced stream:
 The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
 Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies: 285
 It seemed he never, never could redeem
 From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes;
 So mused awhile, entailed in woofed phantasies.

XXXIII

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
 Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be, 290

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

He played an ancient ditty, long since mute,
 In Provence called 'La belle dame sans mercy':
 Close to her ear touching the melody;—
 Wherewith disturbed, she uttered a soft moan:
 He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly 295
 Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
 Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured
 stone.

XXXIV

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
 Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
 There was a painful change, that nigh expelled 300
 The blisses of her dream so pure and deep,
 At which fair Madeline began to weep,
 And moan forth witless words with many a sigh,
 While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
 Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye, 305
 Fearing to move or speak, she looked so dreamingly.

XXXV

'Ah, Porphyro!' said she, 'but even now
 Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
 Made tunable with every sweetest vow;
 And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear: 310
 How changed thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
 Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
 Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
 Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
 For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go.' 315

XXXVI

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
 At these voluptuous accents, he arose,

Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star
 Seen 'mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
 Into her dream he melted, as the rose 320
 Blendeth its odour with the violet,—
 Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
 Like Love's alarum, pattering the sharp sleet
 Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

XXXVII

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet, 325
 'This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!'
 'Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
 'No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
 Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.
 Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring? 330
 I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
 Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
 A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing.'

XXXVIII

'My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
 Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest? 335
 Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil-dyed?
 Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
 After so many hours of toil and quest,
 A famished pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
 Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest, 340
 Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
 To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

XXXIX

'Hark! 'tis an elfin storm from faery land,
 Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:

Arise—arise! the morning is at hand;— 345
 The bloated wassailers will never heed;—
 Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
 There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
 Drowned all in 'Rhenish and the sleepy mead.
 Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be, 350
 For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.'

XL

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
 For there were sleeping dragons all around
 At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears.
 Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found: 355
 In all the house was heard no human sound.
 A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
 The arras, rich with horsemen, hawk, and hound,
 Fluttered in besieging wind's uproar;
 And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor. 360

XLI

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall!
 Like phantoms to the iron porch they glide,
 Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
 With a huge empty flagon by his side:
 The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide, 365
 But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
 By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
 The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;
 The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

XLII

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago 370
 These lovers fled away into the storm.

That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitched, with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought-for slept among his ashes cold.

375

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

I

O WHAT can ail thee, Knight-at-arms
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the Lake,
And no birds sing.

II

O what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms, 5
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

III

I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew, 10
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

IV

I met a lady in the Meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light, 15
And her eyes were wild.

V

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant Zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan. 20

VI

I set her on my pacing steed,
 And nothing else saw all day long,
 For sidelong would she bend, and sing
 A faery's song.

VII

She found me roots of relish sweet, 25
 And honey wild, and manna dew;
 And sure in language strange she said—
 'I love thee true!'

VIII

She took me to her elfin grot,
 And there she wept and sighed full sore, 30
 And there I shut her wild wild eyes
 With kisses four.

IX

And there she lulled me asleep,
 And there I dreamed—ah! Woe betide!
 The latest dream I ever dreamed 35
 On the cold hill-side.

X

I saw pale Kings and Princes too,
 Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
 Who cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci
 Thee hath in thrall!'" 40

XI

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
 With horrid warning gapéd wide,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

XII

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the Lake,
And no birds sing.

45

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

ODE TO THE WEST WIND

I

O WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou, 5
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill 10
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion, 15
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine æery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head 20

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might 25

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail, will burst : oh, hear !

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams,
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams, 30

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them ! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers 35

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know 40

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves : Oh, hear !

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear ;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee ;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share 45

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable ! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision ; I would ne'er have striven 50

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !
I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee : tameless, and swift, and proud. 55

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is :
What if my leaves are falling like its own !
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one ! 60

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth !
And, by the incantation of this verse, 65

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind !
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy ! O' Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ? 70

TO A SKYLARK

HAIL to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art. 5

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest. 10

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun. 15

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight, 20

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see—we feel that it is there. 25

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,

As, when night is bare,
 From one lonely cloud
 The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is over-
 flow'd. 29

What thou art we know not;
 What is most like thee?
 From rainbow clouds there flow not
 Drops so bright to see
 As from thy presence showers a rain of melody. 35

Like a Poet hidden
 In the light of thought,
 Singing hymns unbidden,
 Till the world is wrought
 To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not : 40

Like a high-born maiden
 In a palace-tower,
 Soothing her love-laden
 Soul in secret hour
 With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower : 45

Like a glow-worm golden
 In a dell of dew,
 Scattering unbeholden
 Its aerial hue
 Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the
 view ! 50

Like a rose embower'd
 In its own green leaves,
 By warm winds deflower'd,
 Till the scent it gives
 Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged
 thieves : 55

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Sound of vernal showers
 On the twinkling grass,
 Rain-awaken'd flowers,
 All that ever was
 Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass : 60

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
 What sweet thoughts are thine :
 I have never heard
 Praise of love or wine
 That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine. 65

Chorus Hymeneal,
 Or triumphal chant,
 Match'd with thine would be all
 But an empty vaunt,
 A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want. 70

What objects are the fountains
 Of thy happy strain ?
 What fields, or waves, or mountains ?
 What shapes of sky or plain ?
 What love of thine own kind ? what ignorance of pain ? 75

With thy clear keen joyance
 Languor cannot be :
 Shadow of annoyance
 Never came near thee :
 Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety. 80

Waking or asleep,
 Thou of death must deem
 Things more true and deep
 Than we mortals dream,
 Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream ? 85

We look before and after,
 And pine for what is not :
 Our sincerest laughter
 With some pain is fraught ;
 Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought. 90.

Yet if we could scorn
 Hate, and pride, and fear ;
 If we were things born
 Not to shed a tear,
 I know not how thy joy we ever should come near. 95

Better than all measures
 Of delightful sound,
 Better than all treasures
 That in books are found,
 Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground ! 100

Teach me half the gladness
 That thy brain must know,
 Such harmonious madness
 From my lips would flow
 The world should listen then—as I am listening now. 105

THE CLOUD

I BRING fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken 5
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under, 10
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white, 15
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits; 20
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills, 25
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains. 30

- The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
 And his burning plumes outspread,
 Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
 When the morning star shines dead;
 As on the jag of mountain crag, 35
 Which an earthquake rocks and swings.
 An eagle alit one moment may sit
 In the light of its golden wings.
 And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
 Its ardours of rest and of love, 40
 And the crimson pall of eve may fall
 From the depth of Heaven above,
 With wings folded I rest, on mine aëry nest,
 As still as a brooding dove.
- That orbèd maiden with white fire laden, 45
 Whom mortals call the Moon,
 Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
 By the midnight breezes strewn;
 And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
 Which only the angels hear, 50
 May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
 The stars peep behind her and peer;
 And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
 Like a swarm of golden bees,
 When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent, 55
 Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
 Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
 Are each paved with the moon and these.
- I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,
 And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl; 60
 The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
 When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.

From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
 Over a torrent sea,
 Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,— 65
 The mountains its columns be.
 The triumphal arch through which I march
 With hurricane, fire, and snow,
 When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair,
 Is the million-coloured bow; 70
 The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
 While moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
 And the nursling of the Sky;
 I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores: 75
 I change, but I cannot die.
 For after the rain when with never a stain
 The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
 And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
 Build up the blue dome of air, 80
 I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
 And out of the caverns of rain,
 Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
 I arise and unbuild it again.

TO NIGHT

I

SWIFTLY walk over the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone dayligh
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight.

II

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
Star-inwrought !
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day ;
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought !

III.

When I arose and saw the dawn, 15
 I sigh'd for thee;
 When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
 And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
 And the weary Day turned to his rest,
 Lingerin' like an unloved guest, 20
 I sigh'd for thee;

IV

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
'Wouldst thou me?'

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmur'd like a noontide bee, 25
'Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?'—And I replied,
 'No, not thee!'

V

Death will come when thou art dead,
 Soon, too soon— 30
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
 Come soon, soon! 35

TENNYSON, ALFRED, LORD

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

(First published 1852.)

I

BURY the Great Duke
With an empire's lamentation,
Let us bury the Great Duke
To the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation,
Mourning when their leaders fall, 5
Warriors carry the warrior's pall,
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

II

Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?
Here, in streaming London's central roar.
Let the sound of those he wrought for, 10
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore.

III

Lead out the pageant: sad and slow,
As fits an universal woe,
Let the long long procession go, 15
And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,
And let the mournful martial music blow;
The last great Englishman is low.

IV

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,
Remembering all his greatness in the Past 20

No more in soldier fashion will he greet
 With lifted hand the gazer in the street.
 O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute :
 Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,
 The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute, 25
 Whole in himself, a common good.
 Mourn for the man of amplest influence,
 Yet clearest of ambitious crime,
 Our greatest yet with least pretence,
 Great in council and great in war, 30
 Foremost captain of his time,
 Rich in saving common-sense,
 And, as the greatest only are,
 In his simplicity sublime.
 O good grey head which all men knew, 35
 O voice from which their omens all men drew,
 O iron nerve to true occasion true,
 O fall'n at length that tower of strength
 Which stood four-square to all the winds that blew !
 Such was he whom we deplore. 40
 The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.
 The great World-victor's victor will be seen no more.

V

All is over and done :
 Render thanks to the Giver,
 England, for thy son. 45
 Let the bell be toll'd.
 Render thanks to the Giver,
 And render him to the mould.
 Under the cross of gold
 That shines over city and river, 50
 There he shall rest for ever
 Among the wise and the bold

- Let the bell be toll'd :
 And a reverent people behold
 The towering ear, the sable steeds :
 Bright let it be with its blazon'd deeds, 55
 Dark in its funeral fold:
 Let the bell be toll'd :
 And a deeper knell in the heart be knoll'd ;
 And the sound of the sorrowing anthem roll'd . 60
 Thro' the dome of the golden cross ;
 And the volleying cannon thunder his loss ;
 He knew their voices of old.
 For many a time in many a clime
 His captain's ear has heard them boom
 Bellowing victory, bellowing doom : 65
 When he with those deep voices wrought,
 Guarding realms and kings from shame ;
 With those deep voices our dead captain taught
 The tyrant, and asserts his claim 70
 In that dread sound to the great name,
 Which he has worn so pure of blame,
 In praise and dispraise the same,
 A man of well-attemper'd frame.
 O civic muse, to such a name, 75
 To such a name for ages long,
 To such a name,
 Preserve a broad approach of fame,
 And ever-echoing avenues of song.

VI

- Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd guest, 80
 With banner and with music, with soldier and with
 With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest ?
 Mighty Seaman, this is he

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Was great by land as thou by sea ;
Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man,
The greatest sailor since our world began.

Now, to the roll of muffled drums,
To thee the greatest soldier comes ;
For this is he

Was great by land as thou by sea; 90
His foes were thine; he kept us free;

O give him welcome, this is he

Worthy of our gorgeous rites,
And worthy to be laid by thee;

For this is England's greatest son, . . . 95

He that gain'd a hundred fights,

Nor ever lost an English gun ;

This is he that far away

Against the myriads of Assaye

Clash'd with his fiery few and won ; 100

And underneath another sun,

Warring on a later day,

Round affrighted Lisbon drew

The treble works, the vast designs

Of his labour'd rampart-lines, 105

Where he greatly stood at bay,

Whence he issued forth anew,

And ever great and greater grew,

Beating from the wasted vines

Back to France her banded swarms, 110

Back to France with countless blows,

Till o'er the hills her eagles flew

Beyond the Pyrenean pines,

Follow'd up in valley and glen

With blare of bugle, clamour of men, 115
 With shouting of men, and the shouting of men,

Roll of cannon and clash of arms,
And French and English voices of

And England pouring on her foes.

Such a war had such a close.
 Again their ravening eagle rose
 In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing wings, 120
 And barking for the thrones of kings;
 Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown
 On that loud sabbath shook the spoiler down :
 A day of onsets of despair !
 Dash'd on every rocky square 125
 Their surging charges foam'd themselves away ;
 Last, the Prussian trumpet blew ;
 Thro' the long-tormented air
 Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,
 And down we swept and charged and overthrew. 130
 So great a soldier taught us there,
 What long-enduring hearts could do
 In that world's earthquake, Waterloo !
 Mighty Seaman, tender and true,
 And pure as he from taint of craven guile, 135
 O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,
 O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,
 If aught of things that here befall
 Touch a spirit among things divine,
 If love of country move thee there at all, 140
 Be glad, because his bones are laid by thine !
 And thro' the centuries let a people's voice
 In full acclaim,
 A people's voice,
 The proof and echo of all human fame, 145
 A people's voice, when they rejoice
 A civic revel and pomp and game,
 Attest their great commander's claim
 With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
 Eternal honour to his name. 150

VII

A people's voice ! we are a people yet.
 Tho' all men else their nobler dreams forget,
 Confused by brainless mobs and lawless Powers ;
 Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly set
 His Briton in blown seas and storming showers, 155
 We have a voice, with which to pay the debt
 Of boundless love and reverence and regret
 To those great men who fought, and kept it ours.
 And keep it ours, O God, from brute control ;
 O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the soul 160
 Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,
 And save the one true seed of freedom sown
 Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
 That sober freedom out of which there springs
 Our loyal passion for our temperate kings ; 165
 For, saving that, ye help to save mankind
 Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
 And drill the raw world for the march of mind,
 Till crowds at length be sane and crowns be just.
 But wink no more in slothful overtrust. 170
 Remember him who led your hosts ;
 He bad you guard the sacred coasts.
 Your cannons moulder on the seaward wall ;
 His voice is silent in your council-hall
 For ever ; and whatever tempests lour 175
 For ever silent ; even if they broke
 In thunder, silent yet remember all
 He spoke among you, and the Man who spoke ;
 Who never sold the truth to serve the hour,
 Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power ; 180
 Who let the turbid streams of rumour flow
 Thro' either babbling world of high and low ;
 Whose life was work, whose language rife

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

With rugged maxims hewn from life;
 Who never spoke against a foe; 185
 Whose eighty winters freeze with one rebuke
 All great self-seekers trampling on the right :
 Truth-teller was our England's Alfred named ;
 Truth-lover was our English Duke ;
 Whatever record leap to light 190
 He never shall be shamed.

VIII

Lo, the leader in these glorious wars
 Now to glorious burial slowly borne,
 Follow'd by the brave of other lands,
 He, on whom from both her open hands 195
 Lavish Honour shower'd all her stars,
 And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.
 Yea, let all good things await
 Him who cares not to be great,
 But as he saves or serves the state. 200
 Not once or twice in our rough island-story,
 The path of duty was the way to glory :
 He that walks it, only thirsting
 For the right, and learns to deaden
 Love of self, before his journey closes, 205
 He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
 Into glossy purples, which outredden
 All voluptuous garden-roses.
 Not once or twice in our fair island-story,
 The path of duty was the way to glory : 210
 He, that ever following her commands,
 On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
 Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
 His path upward, and prevail'd,
 Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled 215

Are close upon the shining table-lands
 To which our God Himself is moon and sun.
 Such was he : his work is done,
 But while the races of mankind endure,
 Let his great example stand 220
 Colossal, seen of every land,
 And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure :
 Till in all lands and thro' all human story
 The path of duty be the way to glory :
 'And let the land whose hearths he saved from shame
 For many and many an age proclaim 226
 At civic revel and pomp and game,
 And when the long-illumined cities flame,
 Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,
 With honour, honour, honour, honour to him, 230
 Eternal honour to his name.

IX

Peace, his triumph will be sung
 By some yet unmoulded tongue
 Far on in summers that we shall not see :
 Peace, it is a day of pain 235
 For one about whose patriarchal knee
 Late the little children clung :
 O peace, it is a day of pain
 For one, upon whose hand and heart and brain
 Once the weight and fate of Europe hung. 240
 Ours the pain, be his the gain !
 More than is of man's degree
 Must be with us, watching here
 At this, our great solemnity.
 Whom we see not we revere, 245
 We revere, and we refrain
 From talk of battles loud and vain,

And brawling memories all too free
 For such a wise humility
 As befits a solemn fane ; 250
 We revere, and while we hear
 The tides of Music's golden sea
 Setting toward eternity,
 Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,
 Until we doubt not that for one so true 255
 There must be other nobler work to do
 Than when he fought at Waterloo,
 And Victor he must ever be.
 For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill
 And break the shore, and evermore 260
 Make and break, and work their will ;
 Tho' world on world in myriad myriads roll
 Round us, each with different powers,
 And other forms of life than ours,
 What know we greater than the soul ? 265
 On God and Godlike men we build our trust.
 Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's ears :
 The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs and tears :
 The black earth yawns : the mortal disappears ;
 Ashes to ashes, dust to dust ; 270
 He is gone who seem'd so great.—
 Gone ; but nothing can bereave him
 Of the force he made his own
 Being here, and we believe him
 Something far advanced in State, 275
 And that he wears a truer crown
 Than any wreath that man can weave him.
 Speak no more of his renown,
 Lay your earthly fancies down,
 And in the vast cathedral leave him.
 God accept him, Christ receive him. 280

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

Part I.

ON either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot; 5
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver, 10
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four grey walls, and four grey towers, 15
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd 20
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand? 25
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
 In among the bearded barley,
 Hear a song that echoes cheerly
 From the river winding clearly, 30
 Down to tower'd Camelot :
 And by the moon the reaper weary,
 Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
 Listening, whispers ' 'Tis the fairy,
 The Lady of Shallott.' 35

Part II.

THERE she weaves by night and day
 A magic web with colours gay.
 She has heard a whisper say,
 A curse is on her if she stay
 To look down to Camelot. 40
 She knows not what the curse may be,
 And so she weaveth steadily,
 And little other care hath she,
 The Lady of Shalott. 45

And moving thro' a mirror clear
 That hangs before her all the year,
 Shadows of the world appear.
 There she sees the highway near
 Winding to Camelot : 50
 There the river eddy whirls,
 And there the surly village-churls,
 And the red cloaks of market girls,
 Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
 An abbot on an ambling pad,
 Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad, 55

Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
 Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
 And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
 60
 The knights come riding two and two:
 She hath no loyal knight and true,
 The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
 65
 To weave the mirror's magic sights,
 For often thro' the silent nights
 A funeral, with plumes and lights,
 And music, went to Camelot:
 Or when the moon was overhead,
 Came two young lovers lately wed:
 70
 'I am half sick of shadows,' said
 The Lady of Shalott.

Part III.

A BOW-SHOT from her bower-eaves,
 He rode between the barley-sheaves,
 The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
 75
 And flamed upon the brazen greaves
 Of bold Sir Lancelot.
 A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
 To a lady in his shield,
 That sparkled on the yellow field,
 80
 Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
 Like to some branch of stars we see
 Hung in the golden Galaxy.
 The bridle bells rang merrily
 As he rode down to Camelot.:

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott. 90

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot. 95
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd; 100
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river 105
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra lirra,' by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room, 110
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side; 115
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Part IV.

IN the stormy east-wind straining,
 The pale yellow woods were waning,
 The broad stream in his bank complaining, 120
 Heavily the low sky raining

Over tower'd Camelot;
 Down she came and found a boat
 Beneath a willow left afloat,
 And round about the prow she wrote 125
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse—
 Like some bold seer in a trance,
 Seeing all his own mischance—
 With a glassy countenance 130
 Did she look to Camelot.

And at the closing of the day
 She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
 The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott. 135

Lying, robed in snowy white
 That loosely flew to left and right—
 The leaves upon her falling light—
 Thro' the noises of the night
 She floated down to Camelot: 140

And as the boat-head wound along
 The willowy hills and fields among,
 They heard her singing her last song,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy, 145
 Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
 Till her blood was frozen slowly,

And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
 Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
 For ere she reach'd upon the tide
 The first house by the water-side, 150
 Singing in her song she died,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
 By garden-wall and gallery, 155
 A gleaming shape she floated by,
 Dead-pale between the houses high,
 Silent into Camelot.
 Out upon the wharfs they came,
 Knight and burgher, lord and dame, 160
 And round the prow they read her name,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
 And in the lighted palace near
 Died the sound of royal cheer; 165
 And they cross'd themselves for fear,
 All the knights at Camelot:
 But Lancelot mused a little space;
 He said, 'She has a lovely face;
 God in his mercy lend her grace, 170
 The Lady of Shalott.'

ULYSSES

IT little profits that an idle king,
 By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
 Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
 Unequal laws unto a savage race,
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me. 5
 I cannot rest from travel : I will drink
 Life to the lees : all times I have enjoy'd
 Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
 That loved me, and alone ; on shore, and when
 Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades 10
 Vext the dim sea : I am become a name ;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known ; cities of men
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,
 Myself not least, but honour'd of them all ; 15
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
 I am a part of all that I have met ;
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades 20
 For ever and for ever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause. to make an end,
 To rust unburnished, not to shine in use !
 As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
 Were all too little, and of one to me 25
 Little remains : but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more,
 A bringer of new things ; and vile it were
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
 And this grey spirit yearning in desire 30

To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil 35
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail 40
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port: the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners, 45
Souls that have toil'd and wrought, and thought with
me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil; 50
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep 55
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths 60
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho' 65
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. 70

THE LOTOS-EATERS

“COURAGE” he said, and pointed toward the land,
‘This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.’

In the afternoon they came unto a land

In which it seemed always afternoon.

All round the coast the languid air did swoon,

5

Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.

Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;

And like a downward smoke, the slender stream

Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,

10

Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;

And some thro’ wavering lights and shadows broke,

Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.

They saw the gleaming river seaward flow

From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,

15

Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,

Stood sunset-flush’d: and, dew’d with showery drops.

Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger’d low adown

In the red West: thro’ mountain clefts the dale

20

Was seen far inland, and the yellow down

Border’d with palm, and many a winding vale

And meadow, set with slender galingale:

A land where all things always seem’d the same!

And round about the keel with faces pale,

25

Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,

The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,

Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave

To each, but whoso did receive of them,

And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
 Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
 On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
 His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
 And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake, 35
 And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
 Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
 And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
 Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore 40
 Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
 Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
 Then some one said, 'We will return no more;'
 And all at once they sang, 'Our island home
 Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam.' 45

Choric Song.

I

There is sweet music here that softer falls
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
 Or night-dews on still waters between walls
 Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
 Music that gentler on the spirit lies, 50
 Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful
 skies.

Here are cool mosses deep,
 And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
 And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep, 55
 And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
 And utterly consumed with sharp distress,

While all things else have rest from weariness?
 All things have rest : why should we toil alone, 60
 We only toil, who are the first of things,
 And make perpetual moan,
 Still from one sorrow to another thrown :
 Nor ever fold our wings
 And cease from wanderings, 65
 Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm ;
 Nor hearken what the inner spirit sings,
 'There is no joy but calm !'
 Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

III.

Lo ! in the middle of the wood, 70
 The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
 With winds upon the branch, and there
 Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
 Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
 Nightly dew-fed ; and turning yellow 75
 Falls, and floats adown the air.
 Lo ! sweeten'd with the summer light,
 The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
 Drops in a silent autumn night.
 All its allotted length of days, 80
 The flower ripens in its place,
 Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
 Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV.

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
 Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea. 85
 Death is the end of life ; ah, why
 Should life all labour be ?

Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
 And in a little while our lips are dumb.
 Let us alone. What is it that will last? 90
 All things are taken from us, and become
 Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
 Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
 To war with evil? Is there any peace
 In ever climbing up the climbing wave? 95
 All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
 In silence; ripen, fall and cease :
 Give us long rest or death. dark death, or dreamful ease.

V.

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
 With half-shut eyes ever to seem 100
 Falling asleep in a half-dream !
 To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
 Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height ;
 To hear each other's whisper'd speech ;
 Eating the Lotos day by day, 105
 To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
 And tender curving lines of creamy spray ;
 To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
 To the influence of mild-minded melancholy ;
 To muse and brood and live again in memory, 110
 With those old faces of our infancy
 Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
 Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass !

VI.

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
 And dear the last embraces of our wives 115
 And their warm tears : but all hath suffer'd change ;
 For surely now our household hearths are cold :

Our sons inherit us : our looks are strange :
 And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
 Or else the island princes over-bold 120
 Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
 Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,
 And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things,
 Is there confusion in the little isle?
 Let what is broken so remain. 125
 The Gods are hard to reconcile :
 'Tis hard to settle order once again.
 There is confusion worse than death,
 Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
 Long labour unto aged breath, 130
 Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars
 And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

VII.

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
 How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
 With half-dropt eyelids still, 135
 Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
 To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
 His waters from the purple hill—
 To hear the dewy echoes calling
 From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine— 140
 To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
 Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine !
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
 Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

VIII.

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak ; 145
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek :
 All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone :

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-
 dust is blown.
We have had enough of action, and of motion we. 150
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge
 was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-
 fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind. 155
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly
 curl'd
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming
 world :
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring
 deeps and fiery sands, 160
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships,
 and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music entered in a doleful
 song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of
 wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong ;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the
 soil, 165
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil ;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd
 down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys
 dwell,

Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel. 170
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the
shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and
oar;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

OENONE

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand 5
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus 10
Stands up and takes the morning; but in front
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon
Mournful Oenone, wandering forlorn 15
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade 20
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:
The grasshopper is silent in the grass: 25
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the cicala sleeps.
The purple flowers droop: the golden bee
Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.

My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love, 30
 My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
 And I am all aweary of my life.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Hear me O Earth, hear me O Hills, O Caves 35
 That house the cold crown'd snake ! O mountain brooks,
 I am the daughter of a River-God,
 Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
 My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
 Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed, 40
 A cloud that gather'd shape ; for it may be
 That, while I speak of it, a little while
 My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

'O mother Ida, many fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die. 45
 I waited underneath the dawning hills,
 Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
 And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine :
 Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
 Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd, white-hooved, 50
 Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

'O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft :
 Far up the solitary morning smote
 The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes 55
 I sat alone : white-breasted like a star
 Fronting the dawn he moved ; a leopard skin
 Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
 Cluster'd about his temples like a God's ;
 And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow brightens 60
 When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart

Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold, 65
That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
And listen'd the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart.

'My own Oenone,
Beautiful-brow'd Oenone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav'n 70
'For the most fair,' would seem to award it thine,
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die. 75
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added "This was cast upon the board,
When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere due : 80
But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
Delivering, that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire. Here, comes to-day,
Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each
This need of fairest. Thou, within the cave 85
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris, Judge of Gods."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
It was the deep midnight : one silvery cloud 90
Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
 And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
 Violet, amaracus, and asphodel, 95
 Lotos and lilies : and a wind arose,
 And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
 This way and that, in many a wild festoon
 Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
 With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'. 100

'O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
 And o'er him flow'd a golden cloud, and lean'd
 Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
 Then first I heard the voice of her, to whom 105
 Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that grows
 Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
 Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
 Proffer of royal power, ample rule
 Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue 110
 Wherewith to embellish state, "from many a vale
 And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with corn,
 Or labour'd mines undrainable of ore.
 Honour," she said, "and homage, tax and toll,
 From many an inland town and haven large, 115
 Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel
 In glassy bays among her tallest towers."

'O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
 "Which in all action is the end of all; 120
 Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
 And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns
 Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
 Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,

From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born, 125
 A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
 Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
 Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd
 Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
 Above the thunder, with undying bliss 130
 In knowledge of their own supremacy."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
 Out at arm's-length, so much the thought of power
 Flatter'd his spirit; but Pallas where she stood 135
 Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
 O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
 Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
 The while, above, her full and earnest eye
 Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek 140
 Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

' "Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
 These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
 Yet not for power (power of herself
 Would come uncall'd for), but to live by law, 145
 Acting the law we live by without fear;
 And, because right is right, to follow right
 Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Again she said: "I woo thee not with gifts. 150
 Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
 To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
 So shalt thou find me fairest.

Yet, indeed,
 If gazing on divinity disrobed

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair, 155
 Unbiass'd by self-profit, oh ! rest thee sure
 'That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
 So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
 Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
 'To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks, 160
 Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
 Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
 Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
 Commensure perfect freedom."

'Here she ceased,
 And Paris ponder'd and I cried, "O Paris, 165
 Give it to Pallas!" but he heard me not,
 Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me !

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Idalian Aphrodite beautiful, 170
 Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
 With rosy slender fingers backward drew
 From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
 Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
 And shoulder : from the violets her light foot 175
 Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
 Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
 Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes, 180
 The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
 Half-whisper'd in his ear, "I promise thee
 The fairest and most loving wife in Greece,"
 She spoke and laugh'd : I shut my sight for fear :
 But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm, 185

And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,
 As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
 And I was left alone within the bower;
 And from that time to this I am alone,
 And I shall be alone until I die. 190

'Yet, mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?
 My love hath told me so a thousand times.
 Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
 When I past by, a wild and wanton pard, 195
 Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
 Crouch'd fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
 Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
 Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest
 Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew 200
 Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
 Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

'O mother hear me yet before I die.
 They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
 My dark tall pines, that plumed the craggy ledge 205
 High over the blue gorge, and all between
 The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
 Foster'd the callow eaglet—from beneath
 Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
 The panther's roar came muffled, while I sat 210
 Low in the valley. Never, never more
 Shall lone Oenone see the morning mist
 Sweep thro' them; never see them overlaid
 With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
 Between the loud stream and the trembling stars. 215

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 I wish that somewhere in the ruin'd folds

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
 Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her,
 The Abominable, that uninvited came 220
 Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall,
 And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
 And bred this change; that I might speak my mind,
 And tell her to her face how much I hate
 Her presence, hated both of Gods and men. 225

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
 In this green valley, under this green hill,
 Ev'n on this hand, and sitting on this stone?
 Seal'd it with kisses? water'd it with tears? 230
 O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
 O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face?
 O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
 O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
 There are enough unhappy on this earth, 235
 Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:
 I pray thee, pass before my light of life.
 And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
 Thou weightiest heavy on the heart within,
 Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die. 240

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
 Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
 Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
 Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills, 245
 Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
 My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
 Conjectures of the features of her child
 Ere it is born: her child!—a shudder comes

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Across me : never child be born of me, 250
Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes !

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of Death 255
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her and a sound 260
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
What this may be I know not, but I know
That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire.'

MORTE D'ARTHUR

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their Lord,
King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep, 5
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land. 10
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.
Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights 15
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walkng about the gardens and the halls 20
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm 25
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake, 30
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

- Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
 And took it, and have worn it, like a king :
 And, wheresoever I am sung or told
 In aftertime, this also shall be known : 35
 But now delay not : take Excalibur,
 And fling him far into the middle mere :
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'
- To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
 'It is not meet, Sir king, to leave thee thus, 40
 Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
 A little thing may harm a wounded man.
 Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
 Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'
- So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept 45
 And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
 Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
 Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
 Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
 By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock, 50
 Came on the shining levels of the lake.
- There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
 Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
 And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt : 55
 For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
 Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
 Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
 That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
 This way and that dividing the swift mind, 60
 In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
 Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
 There in the many-knotted waterflags,
 That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
 So strode he back slow to the wounded king. 65

'Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
 'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave ?
 What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
 'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
 And the wild water lapping on the crag.' 70

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :
 'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
 Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
 Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight : 75
 For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
 Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
 This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
 Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
 As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing 80
 I bad thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
 Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
 Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought ;
 But when he saw the wonder of the hilt, 85
 How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
 His palms together, and he cried aloud,

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
 Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
 Should thus be lost for ever from the earth, 90
 Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
 What good should follow this, if this were done ?
 What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,
 Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
 Were it well to obey then, if a king demand 95
 An act unprofitable, against himself ?
 The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
 What record, what relic of my lord
 Should be to aftertime, but empty breath

- And rumours of a doubt? but were this kept, 100
 Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
 Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
 Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
 Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
 Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps 105
 Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
 So might some old man speak in the aftertime
 To all the people, winning reverence.
 But now much honour and much fame were lost.'
- So spake he, clouded with his own conceit, 110
 And hid Excalibur the second time,
 And so strode back slow to the wounded King.
 Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
 'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'
 And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere: 115
 'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
 And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'
- To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
 'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
 Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me! 120
 Authority forgets a dying king,
 Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
 That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
 For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
 In whom should meet the offices of all, 125
 Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
 Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
 Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
 Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
 And the third time may prosper, get thee hence: 130
 But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
 I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'
- Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,

And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
 Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword, 135
 And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
 Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
 And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
 Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
 Seen where the moving isles of winter shock 140
 By night, with noises of the northern sea.
 So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :
 But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 145
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
 And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :
 'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
 Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ?' 150

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
 'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
 Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
 Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
 Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men, 155
 So great a miracle as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
 But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 160
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :
 'My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone. •
 Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
 And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear 165
 My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

• So saying, from the pavement he half rose,

Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
 And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
 As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
 Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears, 170
 And would have spoken, but he found not words,
 Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
 O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
 And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard, 175
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
 When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
 Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick!
 I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'
 But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge, 180
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walked,
 Larger than human on the frozen hills.

He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
 Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
 Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves 185
 And barren chasms, and all to left and right
 The bare black cliff chang'd round him, as he based
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
 And on a sudden, lo! the level lakes, 190
 And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
 Beneath them; and descending they were ware
 That all the decks were dense with stately forms 195
 Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
 Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
 A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars.
 And, as it were one voice, an agony
 Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills 200

All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge,' 204
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.

But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud, 210

And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops 215
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—

That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King; 221

Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings. 225

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance, 230
And every chance brought out a noble knight.

Such times have been not since the light that saw
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.

But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world; 235

And I, the last, go forth companionless,
 And the days darken round me, and the years,
 Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge :
 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new, 240
 And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
 Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
 I have lived my life, and that which I have done
 May He within Himself make pure ! but thou, 245
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats 250
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?
 For so the whole round earth is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God. 255
 But now farewell. I am going a long way
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
 (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
 To the island-valley of Avilion ;
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, 260
 Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail 265
 Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
 That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
 Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
 With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere

Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

270

MATTHEW ARNOLD

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

COME, dear children, let us away ;
Down and away below !

Now my brothers call from the bay,
Now the great winds shoreward blow,
Now the salt tides seaward flow ; 5
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away !
This way, this way !

Call her once before you go,— 10
Call once yet !

In a voice that she will know :

“Margaret ! Margaret !”

Children’s voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother’s ear ; 15
Children’s voices, wild with pain,—
Surely she will come again !

Call her once, and come away ;

This way, this way !

“Mother dear, we cannot stay ! 20

The wild white horses foam and fret.”

Margaret ! Margaret !

Come, dear children, come away down ;

Call no more !

One last look at the white-walled town, 25

And the little grey church on the windy shore;
 Then come down !
 She will not come, though you call all day ;
 Come away, come away !

Children dear, was it yesterday 30
 We heard the sweet bells over the bay ?
 In the caverns where we lay,
 Through the surf and through the swell,
 The far-off sound of a silver bell ?
 Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep, 35
 Where the winds are all asleep ;
 Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
 Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
 Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
 Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground ; 40
 Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
 Dry their mail and bask in the brine ;
 Where great whales come sailing by,
 Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
 Round the world for ever and aye ? 45
 When did music come this way ?
 Children dear, was it yesterday ?

Children dear, was it yesterday
 (Call yet once) that she went away ?
 Once she sate with you and me, 50
 On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
 And the youngest sate on her knee.
 She combed its bright hair, and she tended it well,
 When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.
 She sighed, she looked up through the clear green sea ; 55
 She said, "I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
 In the little grey church on the shore to-day.

'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me!
 And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee."
 I said, "Go up, dear heart, through the waves;
 Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves!"
 She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay. 60

Children dear, was it yesterday?
 Children dear, were we long alone?
 "The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan;
 Long prayers," I said, "in the world they say;
 Come!" I said; and we rose through the surf in the
 bay. 65

We went up the beach, by the sandy down
 Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-walled town;
 Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still, 70
 To the little grey church on the windy hill.
 From the church came a murmur of folk at their
 prayers,
 But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.
 We climbed on the graves, on the stones worn with
 rains,
 And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded
 panes. 75

She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
 "Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here:
 Dear heart," I said, "we are long alone:
 The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."
 But, ah! she gave me never a look, 80
 For her eyes were sealed to the holy book!
 Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
 Come away, children, call no more!
 Come away, come down, call no more!

Down, down, down! 85
 Down to the depths of the sea!

- She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
 Singing most joyfully.
 Hark what she sings: "O joy, O joy,
 For the humming street, and the child with its toy; 90
 For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well;
 For the wheel where I spun,
 And the blessed light of the sun!"
 And so she sings her fill,
 Singing most joyfully, 95
 Till the spindle drops from her hand,
 And the whizzing wheel stands still.
 She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
 And over the sand at the sea;
 *And her eyes are set in a stare; 100
 And anon there breaks a sigh,
 And anon there drops a tear,
 From a sorrow-clouded eye,
 And a heart sorrow-laden,
 A long, long sigh; 105
 For the cold strange eyes of a little mermaiden
 And the gleam of her golden hair.
- Come away, away, children;
 Come, children, come down!
 The hoarse wind blows colder; 110
 Lights shine in the town.
 She will start from her slumber
 When gusts shake the door;
 She will hear the winds howling,
 Will hear the waves roar. 115
 We shall see, while above us
 The waves roar and whirl,
 A ceiling of amber,
 A pavement of pearl,

Singing : "Here came a mortal, 120
 But faithless was she !
 And alone dwell forever
 The kings of the sea."

But children, at midnight,
 When soft the winds blow, 125
 When clear falls the moonlight,
 When spring-tides are low ;
 When sweet airs come seaward
 From heaths starred with broom,
 And high rocks throw mildly 130
 On the blanched sands a gloom ;
 Up the still, glistening beaches,
 Up the creeks we will hie,
 Over banks of bright seaweed
 The ebb-tide leaves dry. 135
 We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
 At the white, sleeping town ;
 At the church on the hill-side—
 And then come back down.
 Singing : "There dwells a loved one, 140
 But cruel is she !
 She left lonely forever
 The kings of the sea."

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AN EPISODE

AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,

And fog rose out of the Oxus stream.

But all the Tartar camp along the stream

Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep;

Sohrab alone, he slept not; all night long

5

He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;

But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,

He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,

And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,

And went abroad into the cold wet fog,

10

Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which
stood

Clustering like beehives on the low flat strand

Of Oxus, where the summer-floods o'erflow

When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere;

15

Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,

And to a hillock came, a little back

From the stream's brink—the spot where first a boat,

Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.

The men of former times had crown'd the top

20

With a clay fort; but that was fall'n; and now

The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,

A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.

And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood

Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,

25

And found the old man sleeping on his bed

Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.

And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;
And he rose quickly on one arm, and said :— 30

"Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?"

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said :—

"Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa! it is I.

The sun is not yet risen, and the foe 35

Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.

For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek

Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,

In Samarcand, before the army march'd; 40

And I will tell thee what my heart desires.,

Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan first

I came among the Tartars and bore arms,

I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,

At my boy's years, the courage of a man. 45

This too thou know'st, that while I still bear on

The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,

And beat the Persians back on every field,

I seek one man, one man, and one alone—

Rustum, my father; who, I hoped, should greet, 50

Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,

His not unworthy, not inglorious son.

So I long hoped, but him I never find.

Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.

Let the two armies rest to-day; but I 55

Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords,

To meet me, man to man; if I prevail,

Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—

Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.

Dim is the rumour of a common fight, 60

Where host meets host, and many names are sunk ;
But of a single combat fame speaks clear."

He spoke: and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said :—

"O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine !

65

Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press forever first,
In single fight incurring single risk,
To find a father thou hast never seen ?

70

That were far best, my son, to stay with us
Unmurmuring ; in our tents, while it is war,
And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.
But, if this one desire indeed rules all,

To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight !

75

Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son !
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.

For now it is not as when I was young,

When Rustum was in front of every fray ;

80

But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.

Whether that his own mighty strength at last

Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age,

Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.

85

There go !—Thou wilt not ? Yet my heart forbodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.

Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost

To us ; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace

To seek thy father, not seek single fights

90

In vain ;—but who can keep the lion's cub

From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son ?

Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires."

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left

- His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay: 95
 And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
 He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
 And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
 In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
 And on his head he set his sheep-skin cap, 100
 Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul:
 And raised the curtain of his tent, and call'd
 His herald to his side, and went abroad.
- The sun by this had risen, and clear'd the fog
 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands. 105
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
 Into the open plain; so Haman bade—
 Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
 The host, and still was in his lusty prime. 109
 From their black tents, long files of horse, they
 stream'd;
- As when some grey November morn the files,
 In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes
 Stream over Casbin and the southern slopes
 Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
 Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound 115
 For the warm Persian sea-board—so they stream'd.
 The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
 First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears;
 Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come
 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares. 120
 Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
 The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
 And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
 Light men and on light steeds, who only drink
 The acrid milk of camels, and their wells. 125
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
 From far, and a more doubtful service own'd;

- The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
 Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
 And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder hordes 130
 Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
 Kalmucks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
 Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere;
 These all filed out from camp into the plain. 135
 And on the other side the Persians form'd;—
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd
 The Ilyats of Khorassan; and behind,
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
 Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel . 140
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back, 145
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they
 stood:
- And the old Tartar came upon the sand
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:—
 "Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear! 150
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man."
 As, in the country, on a morn in June,
 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears, 155
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.
 But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool, 160

Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
 That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow :
 Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
 Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves 165
 Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—
 In single file they move, and stop their breath,
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—
 So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up 170
 To counsel; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
 And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
 Second, and was the uncle of the King:
 These came and counsell'd, and then Gudurz said:—

“Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up, 175
 Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
 But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits
 And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart.
 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear 180
 That Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.
 Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
 Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.”

So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and cried:—
 “Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said! 185
 Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.”

He spake: and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
 Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
 But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
 And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd, 190
 Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
 Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
 Just pitch'd; the high pavilion in the midst
 Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.

- And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found 195
 Rustum; his morning meal was done, but still
 The table stood before him, charged with food—
 A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
 And dark green melons; and there Rustum sate
 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist, 200
 And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood
 Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand,
 And with a cry sprang up and dropp'd the bird,
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:—
 "Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight. 205
 What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink."
 But Gudurz stood in the tent-door, and said:—
 "Not now! a time will come to eat and drink,
 But not to-day; to-day has other needs.
 The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze; 210
 For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
 Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
 O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's! 215
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart;
 And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,
 Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.
 Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose!"
 He spoke; but Rustum answer'd with a smile:— 220
 "Go to! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I
 Am older; if the young are weak, the King
 Errs strangely; for the King, for Kai Khosroo,
 Himself is young, and honours younger men,
 And lets the aged moulder to their graves. 225
 Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
 The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
 For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?

For would that I myself had such a son,
 And not that one slight helpless girl I have— 230
 A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,
 And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
 My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
 And he has none to guard his weak old age. 235
 There would I go, and hang my armour up,
 And with my great name fence that weak old man,
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
 And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings, 240
 And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no
 more."

He spoke, and smiled; and Gudurz made reply :—
 "What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
 When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
 Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks, 245
 Hidest thy face? Take heed lest men should say :
 'Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
 And shuns to peril it with younger men.' "

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply :—
 "O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words? 250
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.
 What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
 Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
 But who for men of naught would do great deeds? 255
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame!
 But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
 Let not men say of 'Rustum, he was match'd
 In single fight with any mortal man.'"

He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd and ran
 Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy— 261

- Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
 But Rustum strode to his tent-door, and call'd
 His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
 And clad himself in steel; the arms he chose 265
 Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
 Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
 And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume
 Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.
 So arm'd, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse, 270
 Follow'd him like a faithful hound at heel—
 Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,
 The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
 Did in Bokhara by the river find
 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home, 275
 And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,
 Dight with a saddle-cloth, of broider'd green
 Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.
 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd 280
 The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
 Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
 And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore, 285
 By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
 Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night
 Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came. 290
 And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,
 And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.
 And as afield the reapers cut a swathe
 Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
 And on each side are squares of standing corn, 295

And in the midst a stubble, short and bare—
 So on each side were squares of men, with spears
 Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
 His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw 300
 Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
 Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
 Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—
 At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn, 305
 When the frost flowers the whiten'd window-panes—
 And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
 Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed
 The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar
 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth 310
 All the most valiant chiefs; long he perused
 His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
 For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;
 Like some young cypress, tall, dark, and straight,
 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws 315
 Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
 By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
 So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
 And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
 As he beheld him coming; and he stood, 320
 And beckon'd to him his hand, and said:—

“O thou young man, the air of heaven is soft,
 And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold!
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
 Behold me! I am vast, and clad in iron, 325
 And tried; and I have stood on many a field
 Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe—
 Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
 O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?

- Be govern'd ! quit the Tartar host, and come 330
 To Iran, and be as my son to me,
 And fight beneath my banner till I die !
 There are no youths in Iran brave as thou."
- So he spake, mildly ; Sohrab heard his voice,
 The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw 335
 His giant figure planted on the sand,
 Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
 Hath builded on the waste in former years
 Against the robbers ; and he saw that head,
 Streak'd with its first grey hairs ;—hope filled his soul,
 And he ran forward and embraced his knees, 341
 And clasp'd his hand within his own, and said :—
 "O by thy father's head ! by thine own soul !
 Art thou not Rustum ? speak ! art thou not he ?"
- But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth, 345
 And turn'd away, and spake to his own soul :—
 "Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean !
 False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
 For if I now confess this thing he asks,
 And hide it not, but say : 'Rustum is here !' 350
 He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
 But he will find some pretext not to fight,
 And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
 A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
 And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall, 355
 In Samarcand, he will arise and cry :
 'I challenged once, when the two armies camp'd
 Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
 To cope with me in single fight ; but they
 Shrank, only Rustum dared ; then he and I 360
 Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'
 So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud ;
 Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me."

And then he turn'd and sternly spake aloud :—
 "Rise ! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus 365
 Of Rustum ? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
 By challenge forth ; make good thy vaunt, or yield !
 Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight ?
 Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee !
 For well I know, that did great Rustum stand 370
 Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,
 There would be then no talk of fighting more.
 But being what I am, I tell thee this—
 Do thou record it in thine inmost soul :
 Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt and yield, 375
 Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
 Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer-floods,
 Oxus in summer wash them all away."

He spoke ; and Sohrab answer'd on his feet :—
 "Art thou so fierce ? Thou wilt not fright me so ! 380
 I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
 Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
 Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
 But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
 Begin ! thou art more vast, more dread than I, 385
 And thou art proved, I know, and I am young—
 But yet success sways with the breath of heaven.
 And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
 For we are all like swimmers in the sea, 390
 Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,
 Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
 And whether it will heave us up to land,
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
 Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death, 395
 We know not, and no search will make us know ;
 Only the event will teach us in its hour."

He spoke, and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
 His spear; down from the shoulder, down it came,
 As on some partridge in the corn a hawk, 400
 That long has tower'd in the airy clouds,
 Drops like a plummet; Sohrab saw it come,
 And sprang aside, quick as a flash; the spear
 Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
 Which it sent flying wide;—then Sohrab threw 405
 In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield; sharp rang,
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.
 And Rustum seized his club, which none but he
 Could wield; and unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
 Still rough—like those which men in treeless plains 410
 To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
 Hath made in Himalayan forests wrack,
 And strewn the channels with torn boughs—so huge 415
 The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
 One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside,
 Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
 Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
 And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell 420
 To his knees and with his fingers clutch'd the sand;
 And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,
 And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay
 Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand;
 But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his sword, 425
 But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said:—
 "Thou strik'st too hard! that club of thine will float
 Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
 But rise, and be not wroth! not wroth am I;
 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul. 430
 Thou says't, thou art not Rustum; be it so!

Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?
 Boy as I am, I have seen battles too—
 Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
 And heard their hollow roar of dying men; 435
 But never was my heart thus touch'd before.
 Are they from Heaven, these softening of the heart?
 O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!
 Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
 And make a truce, and sit upon this sand, 440
 And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
 And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
 There are enough foes in the Persian host,
 Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou 445
 May'st fight; fight them, when they confront thy spear;
 But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!"

He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
 And stood erect, trembling with rage; his club
 He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear, 450
 Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand
 Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn-star,
 The baleful sign of fevers; dust had soil'd
 His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms. 454
 His breast heaved, his lips foam'd, and twice his voice
 Was choked with rage; at last these words broke way :
 "Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
 Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!
 Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
 Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now 460
 With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance;
 But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
 Of battle, and with me, who make no play
 Of war; I fight it out, and hand to hand.
 Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine! 465

Remember all thy valour; try thy feints
 And cunning! all the pity I had is gone;
 Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts
 With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles."

He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts, 470
 And he too drew his sword; at once they rush'd
 Together, as two eagles on one prey

Come rushing down together from the clouds,
 One from the east, one from the west; their shields
 Dash'd with a clang together, and a din 475

Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
 Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
 Of hewing axes, crashing trees—such blows
 Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.

And you would say that sun and stars took part 480
 In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud

Grew suddenly in heaven, and dark'd the sun
 Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
 Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
 And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair. 485

In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;
 For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
 Stood in broad day light, and the sky was pure,
 And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.

But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes 490
 And labouring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
 Which Sohrab held stiff out; the steel-spiked spear
 Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,
 And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.

Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm, 495
 Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest
 He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
 Never till now defiled, sank to the dust;

And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the gloom

Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air, 500
 And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the horse,
 Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry :—
 No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
 Of some pain'd desert-lion, who all day
 Hath trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side, 505
 And comes at night to die upon the sand.
 The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,
 And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
 But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,
 And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd 510
 His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,
 Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
 And in the hand the hilt remain'd alone.
 Then Rustum raised his head; his dreadful eyes
 Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear, 515
 And shouted: "Rustum!"—Sohrab heard that shout,
 And shrank amazed; back he recoil'd one step,
 And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing form;
 And then he stood bewilder'd; and he dropp'd
 His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side, 520
 He reel'd, and, staggering back, sank to the ground;
 And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,
 And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
 The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair—
 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet, 525
 And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.
 Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began :—
 "Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
 A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
 And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent; 530
 Or else that the great Rustum would come down
 Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
 His heart to take a gift, and let thee go;

And then that all the Tartar host would praise
 Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame, 535
 To glad thy father in his weak old age.
 Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man !
 Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be
 Than to thy friends, and to thy father old."

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied :— 540
 "Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt in vain.
 Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man !
 No ! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
 For were I match'd with ten such men as thee,
 And I were that which till to-day I was, 545
 They should be lying here, I standing there.
 'But that beloved name unnerved my arm—
 That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
 Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
 Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarmed foe. 550
 And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
 But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear :
 The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death !
 My father, whom I seek through all the world,
 He shall avenge my death, and punish thee !" 555

As when some hunter in the spring hath found
 A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
 Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,
 And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
 And follow'd her to find her where she fell 560
 Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back
 From hunting, and a great way off describes
 His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
 His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
 Circles above his eyry, with loud screams 565
 Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
 Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,

In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
 A heap of fluttering feathers—never more
 Shall the lake glass her, flying over it; 570
 Never the black and dripping precipices
 Echo her stormy scream as she sails by—
 As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,
 So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
 Over his dying son, and knew him not. 575

But, with a cold incredulous voice, he said :—
 “What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
 The mighty Rustum never had a son.”

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied :—
 “Ah yes, he had ! and that lost son am I. 580

Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
 Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
 Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;
 And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
 To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee. 585

Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son !
 What will that grief, what will that vengeance be ?
 Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen !

Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
 My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells 590

With that old king, her father, who grows grey
 With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
 Her most I pity, who no more will see
 Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
 With spoils and honour, when the war is done. 595

But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
 From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
 And then will that defenceless woman learn
 That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more,
 But that in battle with a nameless foe, 600
 By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain.”

He spoke; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,
 Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
 He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.
 Nor did he yet believe it was his son 605
 Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;
 For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
 Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
 Had been a puny girl, no boy at all—
 So that sad mother sent him word, for fear 610
 Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms.
 And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
 By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;
 Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
 So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plunged in thought 615
 And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
 Of the bright rocking ocean sets to shore
 At the full moon; tears gather'd in his eyes;
 For he remember'd his own early youth,
 And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn, 620
 The shepherd from his mountain-lodge describes
 A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,
 Through many rolling clouds—so Rustum saw
 His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
 And that old king, her father, who loved well 625
 His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
 With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
 They three, in that long distant summer-time—
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
 And hound, and morn on those delightful hills 630
 In Ader-baijan. And he saw that youth,
 Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
 Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
 Like somê rich hyacinth which by the scythe
 Of an unskilful gardener has been cut, 635

Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
 And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
 On the mown, dying grass—so Sohrab lay,
 Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
 And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said :— 640

“O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
 Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved.
 Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
 Have told thee false—thou art not Rustum’s son.
 For Rustum had no son; one child he had— 645
 But one—a girl; who with her mother now
 Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.”

But Sohrab answer’d him in wrath; for now
 The anguish of the deep-fix’d spear grew fierce, 650
 And he desired to draw forth the steel,
 And let the blood flow free, and so to die—
 But first he would convince his stubborn foe;
 And rising sternly on one arm, he said :—

“Man who art thou who dost deny my words? 655
 Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
 And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.
 I tell thee, prick’d upon this arm I bear
 That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
 That she might prick it on the babe she bore.” 660

He spoke; and all the blood left Rustum’s cheeks,
 And his knees totter’d, and he smote his hand
 Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
 That the hard iron corslet clank’d aloud;
 And to his heart he press’d the other hand, 665
 And in a hollow voice he spake, and said :—

“Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie!
 If thou show this, then art thou Rustum’s son.”

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed

His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm, 670
 And show'd a sign in faint vermilion points
 Prick'd; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
 Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
 An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints, 674
 And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
 Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands—
 So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
 On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
 It was that griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,
 Rustum's great father, whom they left to die, 680
 A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks;
 Him that kind creature found, and reared, and loved—
 Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
 And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,
 And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes, 685
 And then he touch'd it with his hand, and said :—
 "How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
 Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?"
 He spoke; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood
 Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry : 690
 "O boy—thy father!"—and his voice choked there.
 And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
 And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.
 But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
 His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips, 695
 And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,
 Trying to call him back to life; and life
 Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
 And they stood wide with horror; and he seized
 In both his hands the dust which lay around, 700
 And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,—
 His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms;
 And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,

And his sobs choked him ; and he clutch'd his sword,
To draw it, and forever let life out. 705

But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spake, and said :—

“Father, forbear ! for I but meet to-day
The doom which at my birth was written down
In heaven, and thou art heaven's unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou, 711

When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it ! but fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel ; fate, fate engaged

The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear. 715
But let us speak no more of this ! I find
My father ; let me feel that I have found !

Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say : ‘My son !’ 720
Quick ! quick ! for number'd are my sands of life,
And swift ; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—

Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in heaven that this should be.” 725

So said he, and his voice released the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth ; he cast
His arm round his son's neck, and wept aloud
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts, 729

When they saw Rustum's grief ; and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other moved
His head, as if inquiring what their grief 734

Might mean ; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said :—

"Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should first have rotted on their nimble joints,
Or ere they brought thy master to this field!" 740

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse, and said :—
"Is this, then, Ruksh! How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,
My terrible father's terrible horse! and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee. 745
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane!
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan, 750
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine, 754
And said: 'O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!'—but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream;
But lodged among my father's foes, and seen
Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand, 760
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream, 765
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."

Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewail'd :—
"Oh, that its waves were flowing over me!
Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!" 770
But, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied :—

- "Desire not that, my father! thou must live.
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
 As some are born to be obscured, and die.
 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do, 775
 And reap a second glory in thine age;
 Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
 But come! thou seest this great host of men
 Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these!
 Let me entreat for them; what have they done? 780
 They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
 But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
 But carry me with thee to Seistan,
 And place me on a bed and mourn for me, 785
 Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.
 And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
 And heap a stately mound above my bones,
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all.
 That so the passing horseman on the waste 790
 May see my tomb a great way off, and cry:
 'Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there.
 Whom his great father did in ignorance kill!
 And I be not forgotten in my grave.'
 And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:— 795
 "Fear not! as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
 So shall it be; for I will burn my tents,
 And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
 And carry thee away to Seistan,
 And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee, 800
 With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
 And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
 And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all,
 And men shall not forget thee in thy grave. 805

- And I will spare thy host ; yea, let them go !
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace !
 What should I do with slaying any more ?
 For would that all whom I have ever slain
 Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes, 810
 And they who were call'd champions in their time,
 And through whose death I won that fame I have—
 And I were nothing but a common man,
 A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
 So thou mightest live too, my son, my son ! 815
 Or rather would that I, even I myself,
 Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
 Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
 Not thou of mine ! and I might die, not thou ;
 And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan ; 820
 And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine ;
 And say : ' O son, I weep thee not too sore,
 For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end !'
 But now in blood and battles was my youth,
 And full of blood and battles in my age, 825
 And I shall never end this life of blood."
- Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied :—
 " A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man !
 But thou shalt yet have peace ; only not now,
 Not yet ! but thou shalt have it on that day 830
 When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
 Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,
 Returning home over the salt blue sea,
 From laying thy dear master in his grave."
- And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said :—
 " Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea ! 836
 Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure."
- He spoke ; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took
 The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased

- His wound's imperious anguish; but the blood 840
 Came welling from the open gash, and life
 Flow'd with the stream;—all down his cold white side
 The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soil'd,
 Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
 Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank, 845
 By children whom their nurses call with haste
 Indoors from the sun's eye; his head dropp'd low,
 His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay—
 White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
 Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame,
 Convulsed him back to life, he open'd them, 851
 And fix'd them feebly on his father's face;
 Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
 Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
 Regretting the warm mansion which it left, 855
 And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.
 So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead;
 And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
 Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
 As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd 860
 By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
 His house, now 'mid their broken flights of steps
 Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
 So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
 And night came down over the solemn waste, 865
 And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
 And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,
 Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
 As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
 Began to twinkle through the fog; for now 870
 Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;
 The Persians took it on the open sands

Southward, the Tartars by the river marge;
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic river floated on, 875
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasman waste,
Under the solitary moon;—he flow'd
Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè, 880
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles— 885
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer:—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright 890
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bath'd stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

BALDER DEAD

AN EPISODE

1. SENDING

So on the floor lay Balder dead; and round
Lay thickly strewn swords, axes, darts, and spears,
Which all the Gods in sport had idly thrown
At Balder, whom no weapon pierced or clove;
But in his breast stood fixt the fatal bough 5
Of mistletoe, which Lok the Accuser gave
To Hoder, and unwitting Hoder threw—
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.

And all the Gods and all the Heroes came,
And stood round Balder on the bloody floor, 10
Weeping and wailing; and Valhalla rang
Up to its golden roof with sobs and cries;
And on the tables stood the untasted meats,
And in the horns and gold-rimm'd skulls the wine.
And now would night have fall'n, and found them yet
Wailing; but otherwise was Odin's will. 16
And thus the Father of the ages spake;—

“Enough of tears, ye Gods, enough of wail!
Not to lament in was Valhalla made.
If any here might weep for Balder's death, 20
I most might weep, his father; such a son
I lose to-day, so bright, so loved a God.
But he has met that doom, which long ago
The Nornies, when his mother bare him, spun,
And fate set seal, that so his end must be, 25
Balder has met his death, and ye survive—
Weep him an hour, but what can grief avail?

For ye yourselves, ye Gods, shall meet your doom,
 All ye who hear me, and inhabit Heaven,
 And I too, Odin too, the Lord of all. 30
 But ours we shall not meet, when that day comes,
 With women's tears and weak complaining cries—
 Why should we meet another's portion so?
 Rather it fits you, having wept your hour,
 With cold dry eyes, and hearts composed and stern, 35
 To live, as erst, your daily life in Heaven.
 By me shall vengeance on the murderer Lok,
 The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,
 Be strictly cared for, in the appointed day.
 Meanwhile, to-morrow, when the morning dawns, 40
 Bring wood to the seashore to Balder's ship,
 And on the deck build high a funeral-pile,
 And on the top lay Balder's corpse, and put
 Fire to the wood, and send him out to sea
 To burn; for that is what the dead desire." 45
 So spake the King of Gods, and straightway rose,
 And mounted his horse Sleipner, whom he rode;
 And from the hall of Heaven he rode away
 To Lidskialf, and sate upon his throne,
 The mount, from whence his eye surveys the world. 50
 And far from Heaven he turn'd his shining orbs
 To look on Midgard, and the earth, and men.
 And on the conjuring Lapps he bent his gaze
 Whom antler'd reindeer pull over the snow;
 And on the Finns, the gentlest of mankind, 55
 Fair men, who live in holes under the ground;
 Nor did he look once more to Ida's plain,
 Nor tow'rd Valhalla, and the sorrowing Gods;
 For well he knew the Gods would heed his word,
 And cease to mourn, and think of Balder's pyre. 60
 But in Valhalla all the Gods went back

From around Balder, all the Heroes went ;
 And left his body stretched upon the floor.
 And on their golden chairs they sate again,
 Beside the tables, in the hall of Heaven ; 65
 And before each the cooks who served them plac'd
 New messes of the boar Serimner's flesh,
 And the Valkyries crown'd their horns with mead.
 So they, with pent-up hearts, and tearless eyes,
 Wailing no more, in silence ate and drank, 70
 While Twilight fell, and sacred Night came on.

But the blind Hoder left the feasting Gods
 In Odin's halls, and went through Asgard streets,
 And past the haven where the Gods have moor'd
 Their ships, and through the gate, beyond the wall ; 75
 Though sightless, yet his own mind led the God.

Down to the margin of the roaring sea
 He came, and sadly went along the sand,
 Between the waves and black o'erhanging cliffs
 Where in and out the screaming sea-fowl fly ; 80

Until he came to where a gully breaks
 Through the cliff-wall, and a fresh stream runs down
 From the high moors behind, and meets the sea.
 There, in the glen, Fensaler stands, the house
 Of Frea, honour'd mother of the Gods, 85

And shows its lighted windows to the main.
 There he went up, and pass'd the open doors ;
 And in the hall he found those women old,
 The prophetesses, who by rite eterne
 On Frea's hearth feed high the sacred fire 90

Both night and day ; and by the inner wall
 Upon her golden chair the Mother sate,
 With folded hands, revolving things to come.
 To her drew Hoder near, and spake, and said :—

"Mother, a child of bale thou bar'st in me ! 95

For, first, thou barest me with blinded eyes,
 Sightless and helpless, wandering weak in Heaven;
 And, after that, of ignorant witless mind
 Thou barest me, and unforeseeing soul;
 That I alone must take the branch from Lok, 100
 The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,
 And cast it at the dear-loved Balder's breast
 At whom the Gods in sport their weapons threw—
 'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.
 Now therefore what to attempt, or whither fly, 105
 For who will bear my hateful sight in Heaven?
 Can I, O mother, bring them Balder back?
 Or—for thou know'st the fates, and things allow'd—
 Can I with Hela's power a compact strike,
 And make exchange, and give my life for his?" 110

He spoke: the mother of the Gods replied:—
 "Hoder, ill-fated, child of bale, my son,
 Sightless in soul and eye, what words are these?
 That one, long portion'd with his doom of death,
 Should change his lot, and fill another's life, 115
 And Hela yield to this, and let him go!
 On Balder Death hath laid her hand, not thee;
 Nor doth she count this life a price for that.
 For many Gods in Heaven, not thou alone,
 Would freely die to purchase Balder back 120
 And wend themselves to Hela's gloomy realm.
 For not so gladsome is that life in Heaven
 Which Gods and heroes lead, in feast and fray,
 Waiting the darkness of the final times,
 That one should grudge its loss for Balder's sake, 125
 Balder their joy, so bright, so loved a God.
 But fate withstands, and laws forbid this way.
 Yet in my secret mind one way I know,
 Nor do I judge if it shall win or fail;

- But much must still be tried, which shall but fail." 130
 And the blind Hoder answer'd her and said :—
 "What way is this, O mother, that thou show'st?
 Is it a matter which a God might try?"
 And straight the mother of Gods replied :—
 "There is a road which leads to Hela's realm, 135
 Untrodden, lonely, far from light and Heaven.
 Who goes that way must take no other horse
 To ride, but Sleipner, Odin's horse, alone.
 Nor must he choose that common path of Gods
 Which every day they come and go in Heaven, 140
 O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,
 Past Midgard fortress, down to earth and men.
 But he must tread a dark untravell'd road
 Which branches from the north of Heaven, and ride
 Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice, 145
 Through valleys deep-engulph'd, with roaring streams.
 And he will reach on the tenth morn a bridge
 Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,
 Not Bifrost, but that bridge a Damsel keeps,
 Who tells the passing troops of dead their way 150
 To the low shore of ghosts, and Hela's realm.
 And she will bid him northward steer his course.
 Then he will journey through no lighted land,
 Nor see the sun arise, nor see it set;
 But he must ever watch the northern Bear, 155
 Who from her frozen height with jealous eye
 Confronts the Dog and Hunter in the south,
 And is alone not dipt in Ocean's stream.
 And straight he will come down to Ocean's strand—
 Ocean, whose watery ring enfolds the world, 160
 And on whose marge the ancient giants dwell.
 But he will reach its unknown northern shore,
 Far, far beyond the outmost giant's home.

- At the chink'd fields of ice, the waste of snow;
 And he must fare across the dismal ice 165
 Northward, until he meets a stretching wall
 Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.
 But then he must dismount, and on the ice
 Tighten the girths of Sleipner, Odin's horse,
 And make him leap the grate, and come within 170
 And he will see stretch round him Hela's realm,
 The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,
 And hear the roaring of the streams of Hell.
 And he will see the feeble, shadowy tribes,
 And Balder sitting crown'd, and Hela's throne. 175
 Then must he not regard the wailful ghosts
 Who all will flit, like eddying leaves, around;
 But he must straight accost their solemn queen,
 And pay her homage, and entreat with prayers,
 Telling her all that grief they have in Heaven 180
 For Balder, whom he holds by right below;
 If haply he may melt her heart with words,
 And make her yield, and give him Balder back."
- She spoke; but Hoder answer'd her and said:—
 "Mother, a dreadful way is this thou show'st; 185
 No journey for a sightless God to go!"
- And straight the mother of the Gods replied:—
 "Therefore thyself thou shalt not go, my son.
 But he whom first thou meetest when thou com'st
 To Asgard, and declar'st this hidden way, 190
 Shall go; and I will be his guide unseen."
- She spoke, and on her face let fall her veil,
 And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands,
 But at the central hearth those women old,
 Who while the Mother spake had ceased their toil, 195
 Began again to heap the sacred fire.
 And Hoder turn'd, and left his mother's house,

Fensaler, whose lit windows look to sea;
 And came again down to the roaring waves,
 And back along the beach to Asgard went, 200
 Pondering on that which Frea said should be.

But night came down, and darken'd Asgard streets:
 Then from their loathed feasts the Gods arose,
 And lighted torches, and took up the corpse
 Of Balder from the floor of Odin's hall, 205

And laid it on a bier, and bare him home
 Through the fast-darkening streets to his own house,
 Breidablik, on whose columns Balder graved
 The enchantments that recall the dead to life.
 For wise he was, and many curious arts, 210

Poëtures of runes, and healing herbs he knew;
 Unhappy! but that art he did not know,
 To keep his own life safe, and see the sun.
 There to his hall the Gods brought Balder home,
 And each bespoke him as he laid him down:— 215

"Would that ourselves, O Balder, we were borne
 Home to our halls, with torchlight, by our kin,
 So thou might'st live, and still delight the Gods!"

They spake; and each went home to his own house.
 But there was one, the first of all the Gods 220

For speed, and Hermod was his name in Heaven:
 Most fleet he was, but now he went the last,
 Heavy in heart for Balder, to his house,
 Which he in Asgard built him, there to dwell,
 Against the harbour by the city-wall. 225

Him the blind Hoder met, as he came up
 From the sea cityward, and knew his step;
 Nor yet could Hermod see his brother's face,
 For it grew dark; but Hoder touch'd his arm.
 And as a spray of honeysuckle flowers 230
 Brushes across a tired traveller's face

Who shuffles through the deep dew-moisten'd dust,
 On a May evening, in the darken'd lanes,
 And starts him, that he thinks a ghost went by—
 So Hoder brush'd by Hermod's side, and said :— 235

“Take Sleipner, Hermod, and set forth with dawn
 To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back;
 And they shall be thy guides, who have the power.”

He spake, and brush'd soft by, and disappear'd.
 And Hermod gazed into the night, and said :— 240

“Who is it utters through the dark his hest
 So quickly, and will wait for no reply?

The voice was like the unhappy Hoder's voice.

Howbeit I will see, and do his hest;

For there rang note divine in that command.” 245

So speaking, the fleet-footed Hermod came
 Home, and lay down to sleep in his own house;

And all the Gods lay down in their own homes.

And Hoder too came home, distraught with grief,
 Loathing to meet, at dawn, the other Gods; 250

And he went in, and shut the door, and fixt
 His sword upright, and fell on it, and died.

But from the hill of Lidskialf Odin rose,
 The throne, from which his eye surveys the world;

And mounted Sleipner, and in darkness rode 255
 To Asgard. And the stars came out in heaven,

High over Asgard, to light home the King.

But fiercely Odin gallop'd, moved in heart;

And swift to Asgard, to the gate, he came.

And terribly the hoofs of Sleipner rang 260
 Along the flinty floor of Asgard streets,

And the Gods trembled on their golden beds

Hearing the wrathful Father coming home—

For dread, for like a whirlwind, Odin came.

And to Valhalla's gate he rode, and left 265

Sleipner; and Sleipner went to his own stall,
And in Valhalla Odin laid him down.

But in Breidablik, Nanna, Balder's wife,
Came with the Goddesses who wrought her will,
And stood by Balder lying on his bier. 270

And at his head and feet she station'd Scalds
Who in their lives were famous for their song;
These o'er the corpse intoned a plaintive strain,
A dirge—and Nanna and her train replied.

And far into the night they wail'd their dirge, 275
But when their souls were satisfied with wail,
They went, and laid them down, and Nanna went
Into an upper chamber, and lay down;
And Frea seal'd her tired lids with sleep.

And 'twas when night is bordering hard on dawn, 280
When air is chilliest, and the stars sunk low;
Then Balder's spirit through the gloom drew near,
In garb, in form, in feature as he was,
Alive; and still the rays were round his head
Which were his glorious mark in Heaven; he stood 285
Over against the curtain of the bed,

And gazed on Nanna as she slept, and spake:—

“Poor lamb, thou sleepest, and forgett'st thy woe!
Tears stand upon the lashes of thine eyes,
Tears wet the pillow by thy cheek; but thou, 290
Like a young child, hast cried thyself to sleep.
Sleep on; I watch thee, and am here to aid.

Alive I kept not far from thee, dear soul!
Neither do I neglect thee now, though dead.
For with to-morrow's dawn the Gods prepare 295
To gather wood, and build a funeral-pile
Upon my ship, and burn my corpse with fire,
That sad, sole honour of the dead; and thee
They think to burn, and all my choicest wealth,

With me, for thus ordains the common rite. 300
 But it shall not be so; but mild, but swift,
 But painless shall a stroke from Freia come,
 To cut thy thread of life, and free thy soul,
 And they shall burn thy corpse with mine, not thee.
 And well I know that by no stroke of death, 305
 Tardy or swift, would'st thou be loath to die,
 So it restored thee, Nanna, to my side,
 Whom thou so well hast loved; but I can smooth
 Thy way, and this, at least, my prayers avail.
 Yes, and I fain would altogether ward 310
 Death from thy head, and with the Gods in Heaven
 Prolong thy life, though not by thee desired—
 But right bars this, not only thy desire.
 Yet dreary, Nanna, is the life they lead
 In that dim world, in Hela's mouldering realm; 315
 And doleful are the ghosts, the troops of dead,
 Whom Hela with austere control presides.
 For of the race of Gods is no one there,
 Save me alone, and Hela, solemn queen;
 And all the nobler souls of mortal men 320
 On battle-field have met their death, and now
 Feast in Valhalla, in my father's hall;
 Only the inglorious sort are there below,
 The old, the cowards, and the weak are there—
 Men spent by sickness, or obscure decay. 325
 But even there, O Nanna, we might find
 Some solace in each other's look and speech,
 Wandering together through that gloomy world,
 And talking of the life we led in Heaven,
 While we yet lived, among the other Gods." 330
 He spake, and straight his lineaments began
 To fade; and Nanna in her sleep stretch'd out
 Her arms towards him with a cry—but he

Mournfully shook his head, and disappear'd.
 And as the woodman sees a little smoke 335
 Hang in the air, afield, and disappear,
 So Balder faded in the night away.
 And Nanna on her bed sank back: but then
 Freia, the mother of the Gods, with stroke
 Painless and swift, set free her airy soul, 340
 Which took, on Balder's track, the way below:
 And instantly the sacred morn appear'd.

II. JOURNEY TO THE DEAD

Forth from the east, up the ascent of Heaven,
 Day drove his courser with the shining mane;
 And in Valhalla, from his gable-perch, 345
 The golden-crested Cock began to crow.
 Hereafter, in the blackest dead of night,
 With shrill and dismal cries that bird shall crow,
 Warning the Gods that foes draw nigh to Heaven
 But now he crew at dawn, a cheerful note, 350
 To wake the Gods, and Heroes to their tasks.
 And all the Gods, and all the Heroes, woke,
 And from their beds the Heroes rose, and donn'd
 Their arms, and led their horses from the stall,
 And mounted them, and in Valhalla's court 355
 Were ranged; and then the daily fray began.
 And all day long they there are hack'd and hewn,
 'Mid dust, and groans, and limbs lopp'd off, and blood:
 But all at night return to Odin's hall,
 Woundless and fresh; such lot is theirs in Heaven. 360
 And the Valkyries on their steeds went forth
 Tow'rd Earth and fights of men; and at their side
 Skulda, the youngest of the Nornies, rode;
 And over Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,

Past Midgard fortress, down to earth they came ; 365
 There through some battle-field, where men fall fast,
 Their horses fetlock-deep in blood, they ride,
 And pick the bravest warriors out for death,
 Whom they bring back with them at night to Heaven
 To glad the Gods, and feast in Odin's hall. 370

But the Gods went not now, as otherwhile,
 Into the Tilt-yard, where the Heroes fought,
 To feast their eyes with looking on the fray ;
 Nor did they to their Judgment-Place repair
 By the ash Igdrasil, in Ida's plain, 375
 Where they hold council, and give laws for men.
 But they went, Odin first, the rest behind,
 To the hall Gladheim, which is built of gold ;
 Where are in circle ranged twelve golden chairs,
 And in the midst one higher, Odin's throne. 380
 There all the Gods in silence sate them down ;
 And thus the Father of the ages spake :—

“Go quickly, Gods, bring wood to the seashore,
 With all, which it beseems the dead to have,
 And make a funeral-pile on Balder's ship ; 385
 On the twelfth day the Gods shall burn his corpse.
 But Hermod, thou, take Sleipner, and ride down
 To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back.”

So said he ; and the Gods arose, and took
 Axes and ropes, and at their head came Thor, 390
 Shouldering his hammer, which the giants know.
 Forth wended they, and drave their steeds before.
 And up the dewy mountain-tracks they fared
 To the dark forests, in the early dawn ;
 And up and down, and side and slant they roam'd. 395
 And from the glens all day an echo came
 Of crashing falls ; for with his hammer Thor

Smote 'mid the rocks the lichen-bearded pines,
 And burst their roots, while to their tops the Gods
 Made fast the woven ropes, and haled them down, 400
 And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them on the sward,
 And bound the logs behind their steeds to draw,
 And drave them homeward; and the snorting steeds
 Went straining through the crackling brushwood
 down,

And by the darkling forest-paths the Gods 405
 Follow'd, and on their shoulders carried boughs.
 And they came out upon the plain, and pass'd
 Asgard, and led their horses to the beach,
 And loosed them of their loads on the seashore,
 And ranged the wood in stacks by Balder's ship; 410
 And every God went home to his own house.

But when the Gods were to the forest gone,
 Hermod led Sleipner from Valhalla forth
 And saddled him; before that, Sleipner brook'd
 No meaner hand than Odin's on his mane, 415
 On his broad back no lesser rider bore;
 Yet docile now he stood at Hermod's side,
 Arching his neck, and glad to be bestrode,
 Knowing the God they went to seek, how dear.
 But Hermod mounted him, and sadly fared 420
 In silence up the dark untravell'd road
 Which branches from the north of Heaven, and went
 All day; and daylight waned, and night came on.
 And all that night he rode, and journey'd so,
 Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice, 425
 Through valleys deep-engulph'd, by roaring streams.
 And on the tenth morn he beheld the bridge
 Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,
 And on the bridge a Damsel watching arm'd,

In the strait passage, at the farther end, 430
 Where the road issues between walling rocks.
 Scant space that warder left for passers by;—
 But as when cowherds in October drive
 Their kine across a snowy mountain-pass
 To winter-pasture on the southern side, 435
 And on the ridge a waggon chokes the way,
 Wedged in the snow; then painfully the hinds
 With goad and shouting urge their cattle past,
 Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow
 To right and left, and warm steam fills the air— 440
 So on the bridge that damsel block'd the way,
 And question'd Hermod as he came, and said:—
 "Who art thou on thy black and fiery horse
 Under whose hoofs the bridge o'er Giall's stream
 Rumbles and shakes? Tell me thy race and home. 445
 But yestermorn, five troops of dead passed by,
 Bound on their way below to Hela's realm,
 Nor shook the bridge so much as thou alone.
 And thou hast flesh and colour on thy cheeks,
 Like men who live, and draw the vital air; 450
 Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men deceased,
 Souls bound below, my daily passers here."
 And the fleet-footed Hermod answer'd her:—
 "O Damsel, Hermod am I call'd, the son
 Of Odin; and my high-roof'd house is built 455
 Far hence, in Asgard, in the city of Gods;
 And Sleipner, Odin's horse, is this I ride.
 And I come, sent this road on Balder's track;
 Say then, if he hath cross'd thy bridge or no?"
 He spake; the Warder of the bridge replied:— 460
 "O Hermod, rarely do the feet of Gods
 Or of the horses of the Gods resound

Upon my bridge; and, when they cross, I know.
 Balder hath gone this way, and ta'en the road
 Below there, to the north, tow'rd Hela's realm. 465
 From here the cold white mist can be discern'd,
 Nor lit with sun, but through the darksome air
 By the dim vapour-blotted light of stars,
 Which hangs over the ice where lies the road.
 For in that ice are lost those northern streams, 470
 Freezing and ridging in their onward flow,
 Which from the fountain of Vergelmer run,
 The spring that bubbles up by Hela's throne.
 There are the joyless seats, the haunt of ghosts,
 Hela's pale swarms; and there was Balder bound, 475
 Ride on! pass free! but he by this is there."
 She spake, and stepp'd aside, and left his room.
 And Hermod greeted her, and gallop'd by
 Across the bridge; then she took post again.
 But northward Hermod rode, the way below; 480
 And o'er a darksome tract, which knows no sun,
 But by the blotted light of stars, he fared.
 And he came down to Ocean's northern strand,
 At the drear ice, beyond the giants' home.
 Thence on he journey'd o'er the fields of ice 485
 Still north, until he met a stretching wall
 Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.
 Then he dismounted, and drew tight the girths,
 On the smooth ice, of Sleipner, Odin's horse,
 And made him leap the grate, and came within. 490
 And he beheld spread round him Hela's realm,
 The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,
 And heard the thunder of the streams of Hell.
 For near the wall the river of Roaring flows,
 Outmost; the others near the centre run— 495
 The Storm, the Abyss, the Howling, and the Pain;

These flow by Hela's throne, and near their spring.
 And from the dark flock'd up the shadowy tribes;—
 And as the swallows crowd the bulrush-beds
 Of some clear river, issuing from a lake, 500
 On autumn-days, before they cross the sea;
 And to each bulrush-crest a swallow hangs
 Quivering, and others skim the river-streams,
 And their quick twittering fills the banks and shores—
 So around Hermod swarm'd the twittering ghosts. 505
 Women, and infants, and young men who died
 Too soon for fame, with white ungraven shields;
 And old men, known to glory, but their star
 Betray'd them, and of wasting age they died,
 Not wounds; yet, dying, they their armour wore, 510
 And now have chief regard in Hela's realm.
 Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous crew,
 Greeted of none, disfeatur'd and forlorn—
 Cowards, who were in sloughs interr'd alive;
 And round them still the wattled hurdles hung, 515
 Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and trod them
 deep,
 To hide their shameful memory from men.
 But all he pass'd unhail'd, and reach'd the throne
 Of Hela, and saw, near it, Balder crown'd,
 And Hela sat thereon, with countenance stern; 520
 And thus bespake him first the solemn queen:—
 “Unhappy, how hast thou endured to leave
 The light, and journey to the cheerless land
 Where idly flit about the feeble shades?
 How didst thou cross the bridge o'er Giall's stream,
 Being alive, and come to Ocean's shore? 526
 Or how o'erleap the grate that bars the wall?”
 She spake: but down off Sleipner Hermod sprang,
 And fell before her feet, and clasp'd her knees:

- And spake, and mild entreated her, and said :— 530
 "O Hela, wherefore should the Gods declare
 Their errands to each other, or the ways
 They go? the errand and the way is known.
 Thou know'st, thou know'st, what grief we have in
 Heaven
 For Balder, whom thou hold'st by right below. 535
 Restore him! for what part fulfils he here?
 Shall he shed cheer over the cheerless seats,
 And touch the apathetic ghosts with joy?
 Not for such end. O queen, thou hold'st thy realm.
 For Heaven was Balder born, the city of Gods 540
 And Heroes, where they live in light and joy.
 Thither restore him, for his place is there!"
 He spoke; and grave replied the solemn queen :—
 "Hermod, for he thou art, thou son of Heaven!
 A strange unlikely errand, sure, is thine. 545
 Do the Gods send to me to make them blest?
 Small bliss my race hath of the Gods obtained.
 Three mighty children to my father Lok
 Did Angerbode, the giantess, bring forth—
 Fenris the wolf, the Serpent huge, and Me. 550
 Of these the Serpent in the sea ye cast,
 Who since in your despite hath wax'd amain,
 And now with gleaming ring enfolds the world :
 Me on this cheerless nether world ye threw,
 And gave me nine unlighted realms to rule : 555
 While on his island in the lake, afar,
 Made fast to the bored crag, by wile not strength
 Subdued, with limber chains lives Fenris bound.
 Lok still subsists in Heaven, our father wise,
 Your mate, though loathed, and feasts in Odin's hall :
 But him too foes await, and netted snares, 561
 And in a cave a bed of needle-rocks,

- And o'er his visage serpents dropping gall.
 Yet he shall one day rise, and burst his bonds
 And with himself set us his offspring free, 565
 When he guides Muspel's children to their bourne.
 Till then in peril or in pain we live,
 Wrought by the Gods—and ask the Gods our aid?
 Howbeit, we abide our day; till then,
 We do not as some feebler haters do,— 570
 Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs,
 Helpless to better us, or ruin them.
 Come then! if Balder was so dear beloved,
 And this is true, and such a loss is Heaven's—
 Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restored. 575
 Show me through all the world the signs of grief!
 Fails but one thing to grieve, here Balder stops!
 Let all that lives and moves upon the earth
 Weep him, and all that is without life weep;
 Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP him; plants and stones!
 So shall I know the lost was dear indeed, 581
 And bend my heart, and give him back to Heaven."
 She spake; and Hermod answer'd her, and said:—
 "Hela, such as thou say'st, the terms shall be.
 But come, declare me this, and truly tell: 585
 May I, ere I depart, bid Balder hail,
 Or is it here withheld to greet the dead?"
 He spake, and straightway Hela answered him:—
 "Hermod, greet Balder if thou wilt, and hold
 Converse; his speech remains, though he be dead." 590
 And straight to Balder Hermod turn'd, and spake:—
 "Even in the abode of death, O Balder, hail!
 Thou hear'st, if hearing, like as speech, is thine,
 The terms of thy releasement hence to Heaven;
 Fear nothing but that all shall be fulfill'd. 595
 For not unmindful of thee are the Gods,

Who see the light, and blest in Asgard dwell;
 Even here they seek thee out, in Hela's realm.
 And sure of all the happiest far art thou
 Who ever have been known in earth or Heaven; 600
 Alive, thou wast of Gods the most beloved,
 And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's side,
 Here, and hast honour among all the dead."

He spake; and Balder utter'd him reply,
 But feebly, as a voice far off; he said:— 605

"Hermod the nimble, gild me not my death!
 Better to live a serf, a captured man,
 Who scatters rushes in a master's hall,
 Than be a crown'd king here, and rule the dead.
 And now I count not of these terms as safe 610 •

To be fulfill'd, nor my return as sure,
 Though I be loved, and many mourn my death:
 For double-minded ever was the seed
 Of Lok, and double are the gifts they give.

Howbeit, report thy message; and therewith, 615
 To Odin, to my father, take this ring,
 Memorial of me, whether saved or no:

And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou hast seen
 Me sitting here below by Hela's side,
 Crown'd, having honour among all the dead." 620

He spake, and raised his hand, and gave the ring.
 And with inscrutable regard the queen
 Of Hell beheld them, and the ghosts stood dumb.
 But Hermod took the ring, and yet once more
 Kneel'd and did homage to the solemn queen: 625

Then mounted Sleipner, and set forth to ride
 Back, through the astonish'd tribes of dead, to Heaven.
 And to the wall he came, and found the grate
 Lifted, and issued on the fields of ice.

And o'er the ice he fared to Ocean's strand, 630

And up from thence, a wet and misty road,
 To the armed damsel's bridge, and Giall's stream.
 Worse was that way to go than to return,
 For him;—for others all return is barr'd.
 Nine days he took to go, two to return, 635
 And on the twelfth morn saw the light of Heaven.
 And as a traveller in the early dawn
 To the steep edge of some great valley comes,
 Through which a river flows, and sees, beneath,
 Clouds of white rolling vapours fill the vale, 640
 But o'er them, on the farther slope, descries
 Vineyards, and crofts, and pastures, bright with sun—
 So Hermod, o'er the fog between, saw Heaven.
 And Sleipner snorted, for he smelt the air
 Of Heaven; and mightily, as wing'd, he flew. 645
 And Hermod saw the towers of Asgard rise;
 And he drew near, and heard no living voice
 In Asgard; and the golden halls were dumb.
 Then Hermod knew what labour held the Gods;
 And through the empty streets he rode, and pass'd
 Under the gate-house to the sands, and found 651
 The Gods on the sea-shore by Balder's ship.

III. FUNERAL

The Gods held talk together, group'd in knots,
 Round Balder's corpse, which they had thither borne;
 And Hermod came down tow'rds them from the gate.
 And Lok, the father of the serpent, first 656
 Beheld him come, and to his neighbour spake:—
 "See, here is Hermod, who comes single back
 From Hell; and shall I tell thee how he seems?
 Like as a farmer, who hath lost his dog, 660
 Some morn, at market, in a crowded town—

Through many streets the poor beast runs in vain,
 And follows this man after that, for hours;
 And, late at evening, spent and panting, falls
 Before a stranger's threshold, not his home, 665
 With flanks a-tremble, and his slender tongue
 Hangs quivering out between his dust-smear'd jaws,
 And piteously he eyes the passers by;
 But home his master comes to his own farm,
 Far in the country, wondering where he is— 670
 So Hermod comes to-day unfollow'd home."

And straight his neighbour, moved with wrath,
 replied :—

"Deceiver ! fair in form, but false in heart !
 Enemy, mocker, whom, though Gods, we hate—
 Peace, lest our father Odin hear thee gibe ! 675
 Would I might see him snatch thee in his hand,
 And bind thy carcass, like a bale, with cords,
 And hurl thee in a lake, to sink or swim !
 If clear from plotting Balder's death, to swim ;
 But deep, if thou devisedst it, to drown, 680
 And perish, against fate, before thy day."

So they two soft to one another spake.
 But Odin look'd toward the land, and saw
 His messenger ; and he stood forth, and cried.
 And Hermod came, and leapt from Sleipner down, 685
 And in his father's hand put Sleipner's rein,
 And greeted Odin and the Gods, and said :—

"Odin, my father, and ye, Gods of Heaven !
 Lo, home, having perform'd your will, I come.
 Into the joyless kingdom have I been, 690
 Below, and look'd upon the shadowy tribes
 Of ghosts, and communed with their solemn queen ;
 And to your prayer she sends you this reply :
 Show her through all the world the signs of grief !

Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder stops! 695
 Let Gods, men, brutes, beweeep him; plants and stones :
 So shall she know your loss was dear indeed,
 And bend her heart, and give you Balder back."

He spoke; and all the Gods to Odin look'd;
 And straight the Father of the ages said :— 700

"Ye Gods, these terms may keep another day.
 But now, put on your arms, and mount your steeds,
 And in procession all come near, and weep
 Balder; for that is what the dead desire.

When ye enough have wept, then build a pile 705
 Of the heap'd wood, and burn his corpse with fire
 Out of our sight; that we may turn from grief,
 And lead, as erst, our daily life in Heaven."

He spoke, and the Gods arm'd; and Odin donn'd
 His dazzling corslet and his helm of gold, 710
 And led the way on Sleipner; and the rest
 Follow'd, in tears, their father and their king.

And thrice in arms around the dead they rode,
 Weeping; the sands were wetted, and their arms,
 With their thick-falling tears—so good a friend 715
 They mourn'd that day, so bright, so loved a God.
 And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands
 On Balder's breast, and thus began the wail;—

"Farewell, O Balder, bright and loved, my son!
 In that great day, the twilight of the Gods, 720
 When Muspel's children shall beleaguer Heaven,
 Then we shall miss thy counsel and thy arm."

Thou camest near the next, O warrior Thor!
 Shouldering thy hammer, in thy chariot drawn,
 Swaying the long-hair'd goats with silver'd rein; 725
 And over Balder's corpse these words didst say :—

"Brother, thou dwellest in the darksome land,
 And talkest with the feeble tribes of ghosts,

Now, and I know not how they prize thee there—
 But here, I know, thou wilt be miss'd and mourn'd. 730
 For haughty spirits and high wraths are rife
 Among the Gods and Heroes here in Heaven,
 As among those whose joy and work is war;
 And daily strifes arise, and angry words.
 But from thy lips, O Balder, night or day, 735
 Heard no one ever an injurious word
 To God or Hero, but thou keepest back
 The others, labouring to compose their brawls.
 Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind!
 For we lose him, who smoothed all strife in Heaven."
 He spake, and all the Gods assenting wail'd. 741
 And Freya next came nigh, with golden tears;
 The loveliest Goddess she in Heaven, by all
 Most honour'd after Freya, Odin's wife.
 Her long ago the wandering Oder took 745
 To mate, but left her to roam distant lands;
 Since then she seeks him, and weeps tears of gold.
 Names hath she many; Vanadis on earth
 They call her, Freya is her name in Heaven;
 She in her hands took Balder's head, and spake:—
 "Balder, my brother, thou art gone a road 751
 Unknown and long, and haply on that way
 My long-lost wandering Oder thou hast met,
 For in the paths of Heaven he is not found.
 Oh, if it be so, tell him what thou wast 755
 To his neglected wife, and what he is,
 And wring his heart with shame, to hear thy word!
 For he, my husband, left me here to pine,
 Not long a wife, when his unquiet heart
 First drove him from me into distant lands; 760
 Since then I vainly seek him through the world,
 And weep from shore to shore my golden tears,

But neither god nor mortal heeds my pain.
 Thou only, Balder, wast for ever kind,
 To take my hand, and wipe my tears, and say : 765
 Weep not, O Freya, weep no golden tears !
 One day the wandering Oder will return,
 Or thou will find him in thy faithful search
 On some great road, or resting in an inn,
 Or at a ford, or sleeping by a tree. 770
 So Balder said;—but Oder, well I know,
 My truant Oder I shall see no more
 To the world's end; and Balder now is gone,
 And I am left uncomforted in Heaven."

She spake; and all the Goddesses bewail'd. 775
 Last from among the Heroes one came near,
 No God, but of the Hero-troop the chief—
 Regner, who swept the northern sea with fleets,
 And rul'd o'er Denmark and the heathy isles,
 Living; but Ella captured him and slew;— 780
 A king whose fame then fill'd the vast of Heaven,
 Now time obscures it, and men's later deeds.
 He last approach'd the corpse, and spake, and said :—

"Balder, there yet are many Scalds in Heaven
 Still left, and that chief Scald, thy brother Brage, 785
 Whom we may bid to sing, though thou art gone.
 And all these gladly, while we drink, we hear,
 After the feast is done, in Odin's hall;
 But they harp ever on one string, and wake
 Remembrance in our soul of wars alone, 790
 Such as on earth we valiantly have waged,
 And blood, and ringing blows, and violent death.
 But when thou sangest, Balder, thou didst strike
 Another note, and, like a bird in spring,
 The voice of joyance minded us, and youth, 795
 And wife and children, and our ancient home.

Yes, and I, too, remember'd then no more
 My dungeon, where the serpents stung me dead,
 Nor Ella's victory on the English coast—
 But I heard Thora laugh in Gothland Isle, 800
 And saw my shepherdess, Aslauga, tend
 Her flock along the white Norwegian beach.
 Tears started to mine eyes with yearning joy.
 Therefore with grateful heart I mourn thee dead."

So Regner spake, and all the Heroes groan'd. 805
 But now the sun had pass'd the height of Heaven,
 And soon had all that day been spent in wail;
 But then the Father of the ages said:—

"Ye Gods, there well may be too much of wail!
 Bring now the gather'd wood to Balder's ship; 810
 Heap on the deck the logs, and build the pyre."

But when the Gods and Heroes heard, they brought
 The wood to Balder's ship, and built a pile,
 Full the deck's breadth, and lofty; then the corpse
 Of Balder on the highest top they laid, 815
 With Nanna on his right, and on his left
 Hoder, his brother, whom his own hand slew.
 And they set jars of wine and oil to lean
 Against the bodies, and stuck torches near,
 Splinters of pine-wood, soak'd with turpentine; 820
 And brought his arms and gold, and all his stuff,
 And slew the dogs who at his table fed,
 And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most he loved,
 And placed them on the pyre, and Odin threw
 A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring. 825
 The mast they fixt, and hoisted up the sails,
 Then they put fire to the wood; and Thor
 Set his stout shoulder hard against the stern
 To push the ship through the thick sand;—sparks flew
 From the deep trench she plough'd, so strong a God

Furrow'd it; and the water gurgled in. 831
 And the ship floated on the waves, and rock'd.
 But in the hills a strong east-wind arose,
 And came down moaning to the sea; first squalls
 Ran black o'er the sea's face, then steady rush'd 835
 The breeze, and fill'd the sails, and blew the fire.
 And wreathed in smoke the ship stood out to sea.
 Soon with a roaring rose the mighty fire,
 And the pile crackled; and between the logs
 Sharp quivering tongues of flame shot out, and leapt.
 Curling and darting, higher, until they lick'd 841
 The summit of the pile, the dead, the mast,
 And ate the shrivelling sails; but still the ship
 Drove on, ablaze above her hull with fire.
 And the Gods stood upon the beach, and gazed. 845
 And while they gazed, the sun went lurid down
 Into the smoke-wrapt sea, and night came on.
 Then the wind fell, with night, and there was calm;
 But through the dark they watched the burning ship
 Still carried o'er the distant waters on, 850
 Farther and farther, like an Eye of Fire.
 And as in the dark night a travelling man,
 Who bivouacs in a forest 'mid the hills,
 Sees suddenly a spire of flame shoot up
 Out of the black waste forest, far below, 855
 Which woodcutters have lighted near their lodge,
 Against the wolves; and all night long it flares:—
 So flar'd in the far darkness, Balder's pyre.
 But fainter, as the stars rose high, it flared,
 The bodies were consumed, ash choked the pile. 860
 And as, in a decaying winter-fire,
 A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of sparks—
 So with a shower of sparks the pile fell in,
 Reddening the sea around; and all was dark

- But the Gods went by starlight up the shore 865
 To Asgard, and sate down in Odin's hall
 At table, and the funeral-feast began.
 All night they ate the boar Serimner's flesh,
 And from their horns, with silver rimm'd, drank mead,
 Silent, and waited for the sacred Morn. 870
- And Morning over all the world was spread.
 Then from their loathed feasts the Gods arose,
 And took their horses, and set forth to ride
 O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,
 To the ash Igdrasil, and Ida's plain; 875
 Thor came on foot, the rest on horseback rode.
 And they found Mimir sitting by his Fount
 Of Wisdom, which beneath the ash-tree springs;
 And saw the Nornies watering the roots
 Of that world-shadowing tree with Honey-dew. 880
 There came the Gods, and sate them down on stones;
 And thus the Father of the ages said :—
 "Ye Gods, the terms ye know, which Hermod
 brought.
- Accept them or reject them ! both have grounds.
 Accept them, and they bind us, unfulfill'd, 885
 To leave for ever Balder in the grave,
 An unrecover'd prisoner, shade with shades.
 But how, ye say, should the fulfilment fail ?—
 Smooth sound the terms, and light to be fulfill'd;
 For dear-beloved was Balder while he lived 890
 In Heaven and earth, and who would grudge him tears ?
 But from the traitorous seed of Lok they come,
 These terms, and I suspect some hidden fraud.
 Bethink ye, Gods, is there no other way ?—
 Speak, were not this a way, the way for Gods ? 895
 If I, if Odin, clad in radiant arms,
 Mounted on Sleipner, with the Warrior Thor

Drawn in his car beside me, and my sons,
 All the strong brood of Heaven, to swell my train,
 Should make irruption into Hela's realm, 900
 And set the fields of gloom ablaze with light,
 And bring in triumph Balder back to Heaven?"

He spake, and his fierce sons applauded loud.
 But Frea, mother of the Gods, arose,
 Daughter and wife of Odin; thus she said:— 905
 "Odin, thou whirlwind, what a threat is this!
 Thou threatenest what transcends thy might, even
 thine.

For of all powers the mightiest far art thou,
 Lord over men on earth, and Gods in Heaven;
 Yet even from thee thyself hath been withheld 910
 One thing—to undo what thou thyself hast ruled.
 For all which hath been fixt, was fixt by thee.

In the beginning, ere the Gods were born,
 Before the Heavens were builded, thou didst slay
 The giant Ymir, whom the Abyss brought forth, 915
 Thou and thy brethren fierce, the Sons of Bor,
 And cast his trunk to choke the abysmal void.
 But of his flesh and members thou didst build
 The earth and Ocean, and above them Heaven.

And from the flaming world, where Muspel reigns, 920
 Thou sent'st and fetched'st fire, and madest lights,
 Sun, moon, and stars, which thou hast hung in
 Heaven,

Dividing clear the paths of night and day.
 And Asgard thou didst build, and Midgard fort;
 Then me thou mad'st; of us the Gods were born. 925
 Last, walking by the sea, thou foundest spars
 Of wood, and framed'st men, who till the earth
 Or on the sea, the field of pirates, sail.
 And all the race of Ymir thou didst drown,

- Save one, Bergelmer;—he on shipboard fled 930
 Thy deluge, and from him the giants sprang.
 But all that brood thou hast removed far off,
 And set by Ocean's utmost marge to dwell;
 But Hela into Niflheim thou threw'st,
 And gav'st her nine unlighted worlds to rule, 935
 A queen, and empire over all the dead.
 That empire wilt thou now invade, light up
 Her darkness, from her grasp a subject tear?—
 Try it; but I, for one, will not applaud.
 Nor do I merit, Odin, thou should'st slight 940
 Me and my words, though thou be first in Heaven;
 For I too am a Goddess, born of thee,
 Thine eldest, and of me the Gods are sprung;
 And all that is to come I know, but lock
 In mine own breast, and have to none reveal'd. 945
 Come then! since Hela holds by right her prey,
 But offers terms for his release to Heaven,
 Accept the chance; thou canst no more obtain.
 Send through the world thy messengers; entreat
 All living and unliving things to weep 950
 For Balder; if thou haply thus may'st melt
 Hela, and win the loved one back to Heaven.”
 She spake, and on her face let fall her veil,
 And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands.
 Nor did the all-ruling Odin slight her word; 955
 Straightway he spake, and thus address'd the Gods :
 “Go quickly forth through all the world, and pray
 All living and unliving things to weep
 Balder, if haply he may thus be won.”
 When the Gods heard, they straight arose, and took
 Their horses, rode forth through all the world; 961
 North, south, east, west, they struck, and roam'd the
 world

Entreating all things to weep Balder's death :
 And all that lived, and all without life, wept.
 And as in winter, when the frost breaks up, 965
 At winter's end, before the spring begins,
 And a warm west-wind blows, and thaw sets in—
 After an hour a dripping sound is heard
 In all the forests, and the soft-strewn snow
 Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes, 970
 And from the boughs the snowloads shuffle down ;
 And, in fields sloping to the south, dark plots
 Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow,
 And widen, and the peasant's heart is glad—
 So through the world was heard a dripping noise 975
 Of all things weeping to bring Balder back ;
 And there fell joy upon the Gods to hear.

But Hermod rode with Niord, whom he took
 To show him spits and beaches of the sea
 Far off, where some unwarn'd might fail to weep— 980
 Niord, the God of storms, whom fishers know ;
 Nor born in Heaven ; he was in Vanheim rear'd,
 With men, but lives a hostage with the Gods ;
 He knows each frith, and every rocky creek 984
 Fringed with dark pines, and sands where seafowl
 scream—

They two scour'd every coast, and all things wept.
 And they rode home together, through the wood
 Of Jarnvid, which to east of Midgard lies
 Bordering the giants, where the trees are iron ;
 There in the wood before a cave they came, 990
 Where sate, in the cave's mouth, a skinny hag,
 Toothless and old ; she gibes the passers by.
 Thok is she call'd, but now Lok wore her shape :
 She greeted them the first, and laugh'd, and said :—
 "Ye Gods, good lack, is it so dull in Heaven, 995

That ye come pleasuring to Thok's Iron Wood?
 Lovers of change ye are, fastidious sprites.
 Look, as in some boor's yard a sweet-breath'd cow,
 Whose manger is stuff'd full of good fresh hay,
 Snuffs at it daintily, and stoops her head 1000
 To chew the straw, her litter, at her feet—
 So ye grow squeamish, Gods, and sniff at Heaven!"

She spake; but Hermod answer'd her and said:—
 "Thok, not for gibes we come, we come for tears.
 Balder is dead, and Hela holds her prey, 1005
 But will restore, if all things give him tears.
 Begrudge not thine; to all was Balder dear."

Then, with a louder laugh, the hag replied:—
 "Is Balder dead? and do ye come for tears?
 Thok with dry eyes will weep o'er Balder's pyre. 1010
 Weep him all other things, if weep they will—
 I weep him not! let Hela keep her prey."

She spake, and to the cavern's depth she fled,
 Mocking; and Hermod knew their toil was vain.
 And as seafaring men, who long have wrought 1015
 In the great deep for gain, at last come home,
 And towards evening see the headlands rise
 Of their dear country, and can plain descry
 A fire of wither'd furze which boys have lit
 Upon the cliffs, or smoke of burning weeds 1020
 Out of a till'd field inland;—then the wind
 Catches them, and drives out again to sea:
 And they go long days tossing up and down
 Over the grey sea-ridges, and the glimpse
 Of port they had makes bitterer far their toil— 1025
 So the Gods' cross was bitterer for their joy.

Then, sad at heart, to Niord Hermod spake:—
 "It is the accuser Lok, who flouts us all!
 Ride back, and tell in Heaven this heavy news:

I must again below, to Hela's realm." 1030

He spoke: and Niord set forth back to Heaven.
But northward Hermod rode, the way below,
The way he knew; and traversed Giall's stream,
And down to Ocean groped, and cross'd the ice,
And came beneath the wall, and found the grate 1035
Still lifted; well was his return foreknown.

And once more Hermod saw around him spread
The joyless plains, and heard the streams of Hell.
But as he enter'd, on the extremest bound
Of Niflheim, he saw one ghost come near, 1040
Hovering, and stopping oft, as if afraid—

Hoder, the unhappy, whom his own hand slew.
And Hermod look'd, and knew his brother's ghost,
And call'd him by his name, and sternly said:—
"Hoder, ill fated, blind in heart and eyes! 1045

Why tarriest thou to plunge thee in the gulph
Of the deep inner gloom, but flittest here,
In twilight, on the lonely verge of Hell,
Far from the other ghosts, and Hela's throne?
Doubtless thou fearest to meet Balder's voice, 1050
Thy brother, whom through folly thou didst slay."

He spoke; but Hoder answer'd him, and said:—
"Hermod the nimble, dost thou still pursue
The unhappy with reproach, even in the grave?
For this I died, and fled beneath the gloom, 1055

Not daily to endure abhorring Gods,
Nor with a hateful presence cumber Heaven;
And canst thou not, even here, pass pitying by?
No less than Balder have I lost the light
Of Heaven, and communion with my kin; 1060
I too had once a wife, and once a child,
And substance, and a golden house in Heaven—
But all I left of my own act, and fled

Below, and dost thou hate me even here?
 Balder upbraids me not, nor hates at all, 1065
 Though he has cause, have any cause; but he,
 When with downcast looks I hither came,
 Stretch'd forth his hand, and with benignant voice,
 Welcome, he said, if there be welcome here,
 Brother and fellow-sport of Lok with me! 1070
 And not to offend thee, Hermod, nor to force
 My hated converse on thee, came I up
 From the deep gloom, where I will now return,
 But earnestly I long'd to hover near,
 Not too far off, when that thou camest by; 1075
 To feel the presence of a brother God,
 And hear the passage of a horse of Heaven,
 For the last time—for here thou com'st no more."

He spake, and turn'd to go to the inner gloom.
 But Hermod stay'd him with mild words, and said:—
 "Thou doest well to chide me, Hoder blind! 1081
 Truly thou say'st, the planning guilty mind
 Was Lok's; the unwitting hand alone was thine.
 But Gods are like the sons of men in this—
 When they have woe, they blame the nearest cause.
 Howbeit stay, and be appeased! and tell: 1086
 Sits Balder still in pomp by Hela's side,
 Or is he mingled with the unnumber'd dead?"

And the blind Hoder answer'd him and spake:—
 "His place of state remains by Hela's side, 1090
 But empty; for his wife, for Nanna came
 Lately below, and join'd him; and the pair
 Frequent the still recesses of the realm
 Of Hela, and hold converse undisturb'd.
 But they too, doubtless, will have breathed the balm,
 Which floats before a visitant from Heaven, 1096
 And have drawn upward to this verge of Hell."

He spake; and, as he ceased, a puff of wind
 Roll'd heavily the leaden mist aside
 Round where they stood, and they beheld Two Forms 1099
 Make toward them o'er the stretching cloudy plain.
 And Hermod straight perceived them, who they were,
 Balder and Nanna; and to Balder said:—

“Balder, too truly thou foresaw'st a snare!
 Lok triumphs still, and Hela keeps her prey. 1105
 No more to Asgard shalt thou come, nor lodge
 In thy own house, Breidablik, nor enjoy
 The love all bear toward thee, nor train up
 Forset, thy son, to be beloved like thee.
 Here must thou lie, and wait an endless age. 1110
 Therefore for the last time, O Balder, hail!”

He spake; and Balder answer'd him, and said:—
 “Hail and farewell! for here thou com'st no more.
 Yet mourn not for me, Hermod, when thou sitt'st
 In Heaven, nor let the other Gods lament, 1115
 As wholly to be pitied, quite forlorn.
 For Nanna hath rejoin'd me, who, of old,
 In Heaven, was seldom parted from my side;
 And still the acceptance follows me, which crown'd
 My former life, and cheers me even here. 1120
 The iron frown of Hela is relax'd
 When I draw nigh, and the wan tribes of dead
 Love me, and gladly bring for my award
 Their ineffectual feuds and feeble hates—
 Shadows of hates, but they distress them still.” 1125

And the fleet-footed Hermod made reply:—
 “Thou hast then all the solace death allows,
 Esteem and function; and so far is well.
 Yet here thou liest, Balder, underground,
 Rusting for ever; and the years roll on, 1130
 The generations pass, the ages grow,

And bring us nearer to the final day
 When from the south shall march the fiery band
 And cross the bridge of Heaven, with Lok for guide,
 And Fenris at his heel with broken chain; 1135
 While from the east the giant Rymer steers
 His ship, and the great serpent makes to land;
 And all are marshall'd in one flaming square
 Against the Gods, upon the plains, of Heaven,
 I mourn thee, that thou canst not help us then." 1140

He spake; but Balder answer'd him, and said:—
 "Mourn not for me! Mourn, Hermod, for the Gods:
 Mourn for the men on earth, the Gods in Heaven,
 Who live, and with their eyes shall see that day!
 The day will come, when fall shall Asgard's towers, 1145
 And Odin, and his sons, the seed of Heaven;
 But what were I, to save them in that hour?
 If strength might save them, could not Odin save,
 My father, and his pride, the warrior Thor,
 Vidar the silent, the impetuous Tyr? 1150
 I, what were I, when these can nought avail?
 Yet, doubtless, when the day of battle comes,
 And the two hosts are marshall'd, and in Heaven
 The golden-crested Cock shall sound alarm,
 And his black Brother-Bird from hence reply, 1155
 And bucklers clash, and spears begin to pour—
 Longing will stir within my breast, though vain
 But not to me so grievous, as, I know,
 To other Gods it were, is my enforced
 Absence from fields where I could nothing aid; 1160
 For I am long since weary of your storm
 Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life
 Something too much of war and broils, which make
 Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood.
 Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail; 1165

Mine ears are stunn'd with blows, and sick for calm.
 Inactive therefore let me lie, in gloom,
 Unarm'd, inglorious; I attend the course
 Of ages, and my late return to light,
 In times less alien to a spirit mild, 1170
 In new recover'd seats, the happier day."

He spake; and the fleet Hermod thus replied :—
 "Brother, what seats are these, what happier day?
 Tell me, that I may ponder it when gone."

And the ray-crowned Balder answer'd him :— 1175
 "Far to the south, beyond The Blue, there spreads
 Another Heaven, The Boundless—no one yet
 Hath reach'd it; there hereafter shall arise
 The second Asgard, with another name.

Thither, when o'er this present Earth and Heavens 1180
 The tempest of the latter days hath swept,
 And they from sight have disappear'd, and sunk,
 Shall a small remnant of the Gods repair;
 Hoder and I shall join them from the grave.

There re-assembling we shall see emerge 1185
 From the bright Ocean at our feet an earth
 More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits
 Self-springing, and a seed of man preserved,
 Who then shall live in peace, as now in war.

But we in Heaven shall find again with joy 1190
 The ruin'd palaces of Odin, seats

Familiar, halls, where we have supp'd of old;
 Re-enter them with wonder, never fill
 Our eyes with gazing, and rebuild with tears.
 And we shall tread once more the well-known plain 1195
 Of Ida, and among the grass shall find

The golden dice wherewith we play'd of yore;
 And that time will bring to mind the former life
 And pastime of the Gods, the wise discourse

Of Odin, the delights of other days. 1200
 O Hermod, pray that thou may'st join us then!
 Such for the future is my hope; meanwhile,
 I rest the thrall of Hela, and endure
 Death, and the gloom which round me even now
 Thickens, and to its inner gulph recalls. 1205
 Farewell, for longer speech is not allow'd!"

He spoke, and waved farewell, and gave his hand
 To Nanna; and she gave their brother blind
 Her hand, in turn, for guidance; and the three
 Departed o'er the cloudy plain, and soon 1210
 Faded from sight into the interior gloom.
 But Hermod stood beside his drooping horse
 Mute, gazing after them in tears; and fain,
 Fain had he follow'd their receding steps,
 Though they to Death were bound, and he to Heaven,
 Then; but a Power he could not break withheld. 1216
 And as a stork which idle boys have trapp'd,
 And tied him in a yard, at autumn sees
 Flocks of his kind pass flying o'er his head
 To warmer lands, and coasts that keep the sun;— 1220
 He strains to join their flight, and from his shed
 Follows them with a long complaining cry—
 So Hermod gazed, and yearn'd to join his kin.

At last he sigh'd, and set forth back to Heaven.

RUGBY CHAPEL

NOVEMBER 1857

COLDLY, sadly descends
The autumn evening. The field
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
Of withered leaves, and the elms,
Fade into dimness apace, 5
Silent;—hardly a shout
From a few boys late at their play!
The lights come out in the street,
In the school-room windows;—but cold,
Solemn, unlighted, austere, 10
Through the gathering darkness, arise
The Chapel-walls, in whose bound
Thou, my father! art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom
Of the autumn evening. But ah!
That word, *gloom*, to my mind 15
Brings thee back, in the light
Of thy radiant vigour, again;
In the gloom of November we passed
Days not of gloom at thy side; 20
Seasons impaired not the ray
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.
Such thou wast! and I stand
In the autumn evening, and think
Of bygone autumns with thee. 25

Fifteen years have gone round
Since thou arosest to tread,

In the summer morning, the road
 Of death, at a call unforeseen,
 Sudden. For fifteen years, 30
 We who till then in thy shade
 Rested as under the boughs
 Of a mighty oak, have endured
 Sunshine and rain as we might,
 Bare, unshaded, alone, 35
 Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore
 Tarriest thou now? For that force,
 Surely, has not been left vain!
 Somewhere, surely, afar, 40
 In the sounding labour-house vast
 Of being, is practised that strength,
 Zealous, beneficent, firm!
 Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
 Conscious or not of the past, 45
 Still thou performest the word
 Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—
 Prompt, unwearied, as here!
 Still thou upraisest with zeal
 The humble good from the ground, 50
 Sternly represses the bad;
 Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
 Those with half-open eyes
 Tread the border-land dim
 'Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st, 55
 Succourest!—This was thy work,
 This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life
 Of mortal men on the earth?—

Most men eddy about 60
 Here and there—eat and drink,
 Chatter and love and hate,
 Gather and squander, are raised
 Aloft, are hurled in the dust,
 Striving blindly, achieving 65
 Nothing; and then they die,—
 Perish;—and no one asks
 Who or what they have been,
 More than he asks what waves,
 In the moonlight solitudes mild 70
 Of the midmost Ocean, have swelled,
 Foamed for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst
 Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
 Not with the crowd to be spent, 75
 Not without aim to go round
 In an eddy of purposeless dust,
 Effort unmeaning and vain.
 Ah yes! some of us strive
 Not without action to die 80
 Fruitless, but something to snatch
 From dull oblivion, nor all
 Glut the devouring grave!
 We, we have chosen our path,—
 Path to a clear-purposed goal, 85
 Path of advance!—but it leads
 A long, steep journey, through sunk
 Gorges, o'er mountains in snow.
 Cheerful, with 'friends, we set forth—
 Then, on the height, comes the storm. 90
 Thunder crashes from rock
 To rock, the cataracts reply,

| | |
|--|---|
| Lightnings dazzle our eyes. Roaring torrents have breached The track; the stream-bed descends In the place where the wayfarer once Planted his footstep—the spray Boils o'er its borders! aloft The unseen snow-beds dislodge Their hanging ruin; alas, Havoc is made in our train! Friends, who set forth at our side, Falter, are lost in the storm. We, we only, are left! | 95 |
| With frowning foreheads, with lips Sternly compressed, we strain on, On—and at nightfall at last Come to the end of our way, To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks; Where the gaunt and taciturn host Stands on the threshold, the wind Shaking his thin white hairs— Holds his lantern to scan Our storm-beat figures, and asks: Whom in our party we bring? Whom we have left in the snow? | 105 110 115 |
| Sadly we answer: We bring Only ourselves! we lost Sight of the rest in the storm. Hardly ourselves we fought through, Stripped, without friends, as we are. Friends, companions, and train, The avalanche swept from our side. But thou wouldst not alone Be saved, my father! alone | 120 123 |

Conquer and come to thy goal,
 Leaving the rest in the wild.
 We were weary, and we
 Fearful, and we in our march
 Fain to drop down and to die. 130
 Still thou turnedst, and still
 Beckonedst the trembler, and still
 Gavest the weary thy hand.
 If, in the paths of the world,
 Stones might have wounded thy feet, 135
 Toil or dejection have tried
 Thy spirit, of that we saw
 Nothing—to us thou wast still
 Cheerful, and helpful, and firm!
 Therefore to thee it was given 140
 Many to save with thyself;
 And, at the end of thy day,
 O faithful shepherd! to come,
 Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And through thee I believe 145
 In the noble and great who are gone;
 Pure souls honoured and blest
 By former ages, who else—
 Such, so soulless, so poor,
 Is the race of men whom I see— 150
 Seemed but a dream of the heart,
 Seemed but a cry of desire.
 Yes! I believe that there lived
 Others like thee in the past,
 Not like the men of the crowd 155
 Who all round me to-day
 Bluster or cringe, and make life
 Hideous, and arid, and vile;

But souls tempered with fire,
 Fervent, heroic, and good, 160
 Helpers and friends of mankind.

Servants of God!—or sons
 Shall I not call you? because
 Not as servants ye knew
 Your Father's innermost mind, 165
 His, who unwillingly sees
 One of his little ones lost,—
 Yours is the praise, if mankind
 Hath not as yet in its march
 Fainted, and fallen, and died! 170

See! In the rocks of the world
 Marches the host of mankind,
 A feeble, wavering line.
 Where are they tending—A God
 Marshalled them, gave them their goal. 175
 Ah, but the way is so long!
 Years they have been in the wild!
 Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks.
 Rising all round, overawe;
 Factions divide them, their host 180
 Threatens to break, to dissolve.
 —Ah! keep, keep them combined!
 Else, of the myriads who fill
 That army, not one shall arrive;
 Sole they shall stray; in the rocks 185
 Stagger forever in vain,
 Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need
 Of your fainting, dispirited race,

Ye, like angels, appear, 190
Radiant with ardour divine !
Beacons of hope, ye appear !
Languor is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness not on your brow. 195
Ye alight in our van ! at your voice,
Panic, despair, flee away.
Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, re-inspire the brave ! 200
Order, courage, return.
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
Follow your steps as ye go.
Ye fill up the gaps in our files
Strengthen the wavering lines, 205
Stablish. continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

THE blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand, 5
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn; 10
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Her seemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone 15
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
.....Yet now, and in this place, 20
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face.....
Nothing: the autumn fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house 25
That she was standing on;

- By God built over the sheer depth
 The which is Space begun;
 So high, that looking downward thence
 She scarce could see the sun. 30
- It lies in Heaven, across the flood
 Of ether, as a bridge.
 Beneath, the tides of day and night
 With flame and darkness ridge
 The void, as low as where this earth 35
 Spins like a fretful midge.
- Heard hardly, some of her new friends
 Amid their loving games
 Spake evermore among themselves
 Their virginal chaste names; 40
 And the souls mounting up to God
 Went by her like thin flames.
- And still she bowed herself and stopped
 Out of the circling charm;
 Until her bosom must have made 45
 The bar she leaned on warm,
 And the lilies lay as if asleep
 Along her bended arm.
- From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
 Time like a pulse shake fierce 50
 Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
 Within the gulf to pierce
 Its path: and now she spoke, as when
 The stars sang in their spheres.
- The sun was gone now; the curled moon 55
 Was like a little feather

Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
 She spoke through the still weather.
 Her voice was like the voice the stars
 Had when they sang together. 60

{Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
 Strove not her accents there,
 Fain to be hearkened? When those bells
 Possessed the mid-day air,
 Strove not her steps to reach my side 65
 Down all the echoing stair?)

'I wish that he were come to me,
 For he will come,' she said.
 'Have I not prayed in Heaven?—on earth,
 Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd? 70
 Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
 And shall I feel afraid?

'When round his head the aureole clings,
 And he is clothed in white,
 I'll take his hand and go with him 75
 To the deep wells of light;
 We will step down as to a stream,
 And bathe there in God's sight.

'We two will stand beside that shrine,
 Occult, withheld, untrod, 80
 Whose lamps are stirred continually
 With prayer sent up to God;
 And see our old prayers, granted, melt
 Each like a little cloud.

'We two will lie i' the shadow of 85
 That living mystic tree

Within whose secret growth the Dove
 Is sometimes felt to be,
 While every leaf that His plumes touch
 Saith His Name audibly. 90

'And I myself will teach to him,
 I myself, lying so,
 The songs I sing here; which his voice
 Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
 And find some knowledge at each pause, 95
 Or some new thing to know.

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!
 Yea, one wast thou with me
 That once of old. But shall God lift
 To endless unity 100
 The soul whose likeness with thy soul
 Was but its love for thee?)

'We two,' she said, "Will seek the groves
 Where the lady Mary is,
 With her five handmaidens, whose names 105
 Are five sweet symphonies,
 Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
 Margaret and Rosalys.

'Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
 And foreheads garlanded; 110
 Into the fine cloth white like flame
 Weaving the golden thread,
 To fashion the birth-robcs for them
 Who are just born, being dead.

'He shall fear, haply, and be dumb : 115
 Then will I lay my cheek

To his, and tell about our love,
 Not once abashed or weak :
 And the dear Mother will approve
 My pride, and let me speak. 120

'Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
 To Him round whom all souls
 Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
 Bowed with their aureoles :
 And angels meeting us shall sing 125
 To their citherns and citoles.

'There will I ask of Christ the Lord
 Thus much for him and me :—
 Only to live as once on earth
 With love,—only to be, 130
 As then awhile, for ever now
 Together, I and he.'

She gazed and listened and then said,
 Less sad of speech than mild,—
 'All this is when he comes.' She ceased. 135
 The light thrilled towards her, filled
 With angels in strong level flight.
 Her eyes prayed, and she smil'd.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
 Was vague in distant spheres : 140
 And then she cast her arms along
 The golden barriers,
 And laid her face between her hands,
 And wept. (I heard her tears.)

THE WHITE SHIP

HENRY I OF ENGLAND.—25th November 1120.

By none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.
(*Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.*)

'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.

5

(*The sea hath no King but God alone.*)

King Henry held it as life's whole gain
That after his death his son should reign.

'Twas so in my youth I heard men say,
And my old age calls it back to-day.

10

King Henry of England's realm was he,
And Henry Duke of Normandy.

The times had changed when on either coast
'Clerkly Harry' was all his boast.

Of ruthless strokes full many an one
He had struck himself and his son;
And his elder brother's eyes were gone.

15

And when to the chase his court would crowd,
The poor flung ploughshares on his road,
And shrieked: 'Our cry is from King of God!'

20

But all the chiefs of the English land
Had knelt and kissed the Prince's hand.

And next with his son he sailed to France
To claim the Norman allegiance :

And every baron in Normandy 25
Had taken the oath of fealty.

'Twas sworn and sealed, and the day had come
When the King and the Prince might journey home :

For Christmas cheer is to home hearts dear,
And Christmas now was drawing near. 30

Stout Fitz-Stephen came to the King,—
A pilot famous in seafaring ;

And he held to the King, in all men's sight,
A mark of gold for his tribute's right.

'Liege Lord ! my father guided the ship 35
From whose boat your father's foot did slip
When he caught the English soil in the grip,

'And cried : "By this clasp I claim command
O'er every rood of English land !"

'He was borne to the realm you rule o'er now 40
In that ship with the anchor carved at her prow :

'And thither I'll bear, an' it be my due,
Your father's son and his grandson too.

'The famed White Ship is mine in the bay ;
From Harfleur's harbour she sails to-day., 45

'With masts fair-pennoned as Norman spears
And with fifty well-tried mariners.'

Quoth the King: 'My ships are chosen each one,
But I'll not say nay to Stephen's son.

'My son and daughter and fellowship
Shall cross the water in the White Ship.' 50

The King set sail with eve's south wind,
And soon he left the coast behind.

The Prince and all his, a princely show,
Remained in the good White Ship to go. 55

With noble knights and with ladies fair,
With courtiers and sailors gathered there,
Three hundred living souls we were:

And I Berold was the meanest hind
In all that train to the Prince assign'd. 60

The Prince was a lawless shameless youth;
From his father's loins he sprang without ruth;

Eighteen years till then he had seen,
And the devil's dues in him were eighteen,

And now he cried: 'Bring wine from below;
Let the sailors revel ere yet they row: 65

'Our speed shall o'ertake my father's flight
Though we sail from the harbour at midnight.'
The rowers made good cheer without check;
The lords and ladies obeyed his beck; 70
The night was light, and they danced on the deck.

But at midnight's stroke they cleared the bay,
And the White Ship furrowed the water-way.

The sails were set, and the oars kept tune
To the double flight of the ship and the moon : 75

Swifter and swifter the White Ship sped
Till she flew as the spirit flies from the dead :

As white as a lily glimmered she
Like a ship's fair ghost upon the sea. 79

And the Prince cried, 'Friends, 'tis the hour to sing !
Is a songbird's course so swift on the wing ?

And under the winter stars' still throng,
From brown throats, white throats, merry and strong,
The knights and the ladies raised a song.

A song,—nay, a shriek that rent the sky, 85
That leaped o'er the deep!—the grievous cry
Of three hundred living that now must die.

An instant shriek that sprang to the shock
As the ship's keel felt the sunken rock.

'Tis said that afar— a shrill strange sigh— 90
The King's ships heard it and knew not why.

Pale Fitz-Stephen stood by the helm
'Mid all those folks that the waves must whelm.

A great King's heir for the waves to whelm,
And the helpless pilot pale at the helm ! 95

The ship was eager and sucked athirst,
By the stealthy stab of the sharp reef pierc'd :

And like the moil round a sinking cup
The waters against her crowded up.

A moment the pilot's senses spin.— 100
The next he snatched the Prince 'mid the din,
Cut the boat loose, and the youth leaped in.

A few friends leaped with him, standing near.
'Row! the sea's smooth and the night is clear!'

'What! none to be saved but these and I?' 105
'Row, row as you'd live! All here must die!'

Out of the churn of the chocking ship,
Which the gulf grapples and the waves strip,
They struck with the strained oars' flesh and dip.

'Twas then o'er the splitting bulwarks' brim 110
The Prince's sister screamed to him.

He gazed aloft, still rowing apace,
And through the whirled surf he knew her face.

To the toppling decks clave one and all
As a fly cleaves to a chamber-wall. 115

I Berold was clinging anear;
I prayed for myself and quaked with fear,
But I saw his eyes as he looked at her.

He knew her face and he heard her cry,
And he said, 'Put back! she must not die!' 120

And back with current's force they reel
Like a leaf that's drawn to a water-wheel.

'Neath the ship's travail they scarce might float,
But he rose and stood in the rocking boat.

Low the poor ship leaned on the tide : 125
O'er the naked keel as she best might slide,
The sister toiled to the brother's side.

He reached an oar to her from below,
And stiffened his arms to clutch her so.

But now from the ship some spied the boat, 130
And 'Saved !' was the cry from many a throat.

And down to the boat they leaped and fell :
It turned as a bucket turns in a well,
And nothing was there but the surge and swell.

The Prince that was and the King to come, 135
There is an instant gone to his doom,

Despite of all England's bended knee
And maugre the Norman fealty !

He was a Prince of lust and pride ;
He showed no grace till the hour he died. 140

When he should be King, he oft would vow,
He'd yoke the peasant to his own plough.
O'er him the ships score their furrows now.

God only knows where his soul did wake,
But I saw him die for his sister's sake. 145

By none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.

(Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.)

'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.

150

(The Sea hath no King but God alone.)

And now the end came o'er the water's womb
Like the last great Day that's yet to come.

With prayers in vain and curses in vain,
The White Ship sundered on the mid-main :

155

And what were men and what was a ship
Were toys and splinters in the sea's grip.

I Berold was down in the sea ;
And passing strange though the thing may be,
Of dreams then know I remember me.

160

Blithe is the shout on Harfleur's strand
When morning lights the sails to land :

And blithe is Harfleur's echoing gloam
When mothers call the children home :

And high to the bells of Rouen beat
When the body of Christ goes down the street.

165

These things and the like were heard and shown
In a moment's trance 'neath the sea alone ;

And when I rose, 'twas the sea did seem,
And not these things, to be all a dream.

170

The ship was gone and the crowd was gone,
And the deep shuddered and the moon shone,

And in a strait grasp my arms did span
 The mainyard rent from the mast where it ran;
 And on it with me was another man. 175

Where lands were none 'neath the dim sea-sky,
 We told our names, that man and I.

'O I am Godefroy de l'Aigle hight,
 And son I am to a belted knight.'

'And I am Berold the butcher's son 180
 Who slays the beasts in Rouen town.'

Then cried we upon God's name, as we
 Did drift on the bitter winter sea.

But lo! a third man rose o'er the wave,
 And we said, 'Thank God! us three may He save!' 185

He clutched to the yard with panting stare,
 And we looked and knew Fitz-Stephen there.

He clung, and 'What of the Prince?' quoth he.
 'Lost, lost!' we cried. He cried, 'Woe on me!'
 And loosed his hold and sank through the sea. 190

And soul with soul again in that space
 We two were together face to face:

And each knew each, as the moments sped,
 Less for one living than for one dead:

And every still star overhead 195
 Seemed an eye that knew that we were dead.

And the hours passed; till the noble's son
Sighed, 'God be thy help! my strength's fordone!

'O farewell, friend, for I can no more!
'Christ take thee!' I moaned; and his life was o'er.

Three hundred souls were all lost but one, 201
And I drifted over the sea alone.

At last the morning rose on the sea
Like an angel's wing that beat tow'rds me.

Sore numbed I was in my sheepskin coat; 205
Half dead I hung, and might nothing note,
Till I woke sun-warmed in a fisher boat.

The sun was high o'er the eastern brim
As I praised God and gave thanks to Him.

That day I told my tale to a priest, 210
Who charged me, till the shrift were releas'd,
That I should keep it in mine own breast.

And with the priest I thence did fare
To King Henry's Court at Winchester.

We spoke with the King's high chamberlain, 215
And he wept and mourned again and again,
As if his own son had been slain:

And round us ever there crowded fast
Great men with faces all aghast:

And who so bold that might tell the thing 220
Which now they knew to their lord the King?
Much woe I learnt in their communing.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

The King had watched with a heart sore stirred
For two whole days, and this was the third :

And still to all his court would he say, 225
'What keeps my son so long away?'

And they said : 'The ports lie far and wide
That skirt the swell of the English tide ;

And England's cliffs are not more white
Than her women are, and scarce so light 230
Her skies as their eyes are blue and bright ;

And in some port that he reached from France
The Prince has lingered for his pleasure.'

But once the King asked : 'What distant cry
Was that we heard 'twixt the sea and sky?' 235

And one said : 'With suchlike shouts, pardie !
Do the fishers fling their nets at sea.'

And one : 'Who knows not the shrieking quest
When the sea-mew misses its young from the nest?'

'Twas thus till now they had soothed his dread, 240
Albeit they knew not what they said :

But who should speak to-day of the thing
That all knew there except the King ?

Then pondering much they found a way,
And met round the King's high seat that day : 245

And the King sat with a heart sore stirred,
And seldom he spoke and seldom heard.

'Twas then through the hall the King was 'ware
Of a little boy with golden hair,

As bright as the golden poppy is 250
That the beach breeds for the surf to kiss :

Yet pale his cheek as the thorn in Spring,
And his garb black like the raven's wing.

Nothing heard but his foot through the hall,
For now the lords were silent all. 255

And the King wondered, and said, 'Alack !
Who sends me a fair boy dressed in black ?

'Why, sweet heart, do you pace through the hall
As though my court were a funeral ?'

Then lowly knelt the child at the dais, 260
And looked up weeping in the King's face.

'O wherefore black, O King, ye may say,
For white is the hue of death to-day.

'Your son and all his fellowship
Lie low in the sea with the White Ship.' 265

King Henry fell as a man struck dead ;
And speechless still he stared from his bed
When to him next day my rede I read.

There's many an hour must needs beguile
A King's high heart that he should smile,— 270

Full many a lordly hour, full fain
Of his realm's rule and pride of his reign :—

But this King never smiled again.

By none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.

275

(Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.)

'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.

(The sea hath no King but God alone.)

WILLIAM MORRIS
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON
BOOK XIV

The Sirens — The Garden of the Hesperides — The
heroes do sacrifice at Malea.

Now o'er the open sea they took their way,
For three days, and at dawning of the day,
Upon the fourth, saw the Trinacrian shore,
And there-along they coasted two days more.
Then first Medea warned them to take heed, 5
Lest they should end all memory of their deed
Where dwell the Sirens on the yellow sand,
And folk should think some tangled poisonous land
Had buried them, or some tumultuous sea
O'er their white bones was tossing angrily; 10
Or that some muddy river, far from Greece
Drove seaward o'er the ringlets of the fleece.

But when the Minyae hearkened to this word,
With many a thought their wearied hearts were
stirred,

And longing for the near-gained Grecian land, 15
Where in a little while their feet should stand;
Yet none the less like to a happy dream,
Now, when they neared it, did their own home seem,
And like a dream the glory of their quest,
And therewithal some thought of present rest 20
Stole over them, and well-nigh made them sigh
To hear the sighing restless wind go by.

But now, nigh even on the second day,
As o'er the gentle waves they took their way,
The orange-scented land-breeze seemed to bear 25

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Some other sounds unto the listening ear
 Than all day long they had been hearkening—
 The land-born signs of many a well-known thing.
 Thereat Medea trembled, for she knew
 That nigh the dreadful sands at last they drew, 30
 For certainly the Sirens' song she heard,
 Though yet her ear could shape it to no word,
 And by their faces could the queen behold
 How sweet it was, although no tale it told,
 To those worn toilers o'er the bitter sea. 35

Now, as they sped along, they presently,
 Rounding a headland, reached a little bay,
 Walled from the sea by splintered cliffs and grey,
 Capped by the thymy hills' green wind-beat head,
 Where 'mid the whin the burrowing rabbits fed. 40
 And 'neath the cliff they saw a belt of sand,
 'Twixt Nereus' pasture and the high scarped land,
 Whereon, yet far off, could their eyes behold
 White bodies moving, crowded and girt with gold,
 Wherefrom it seemed that lovely music welled. 45

So when all this the grey-eyed queen beheld,
 She said: 'O Jason, I have made thee wise
 In this and other things; turn then thine eyes
 Seaward, and note the ripple of the sea,
 Where there is hope as well as fear for thee. 50
 Nor look upon the death that lurketh there
 'Neath the grey cliff, though sweet it seems and fair;
 For thou art young upon this day to die.
 Take then the helm, and gazing steadily
 Upon the road to Greece, make strong thine hand 55
 And steer us toward the lion-haunted land:
 And thou, O Thracian! if thou e'er hast moved
 Men's hearts, with stories of the Gods who loved,

And men who suffered, move them on this day,
 Taking the deadly love of death away,
 That even now is stealing over them,
 While still they gaze upon the ocean's hem,
 Where their undoing is if they but knew'.

60

But while she spake, still nigher Argo drew
 Unto the yellow edges of the shore,
 And little help she had of ashen oar,
 For as her shielded side rolled through the sea,
 Silent with glittering eyes the Minyae
 Gazed o'er the surge, for they were nigh enow
 To see the gusty wind of evening blow
 Long locks of hair across those bodies white,
 With golden spray hiding some dear delight;
 Yea, nigh enow to see their red lips smile,
 Wherefrom all song had ceased now for a while,
 As though they deemed the prey was in the net,
 And they no more had need a bait to set.
 But their own bodies fair beyond man's thought;
 Under the grey cliff, hidden not of aught
 But of such mist of tears as in the eyes
 Of those seafaring men might chance to rise.

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A moment Jason gazed, then through the waist
 Ran swiftly, and with trembling hands made haste
 To trim the sail, then to the tiller ran,
 And thrust aside the skilled Milesian man,
 Who with half-open mouth, and dreamy eyes,
 Stood steering Argo to that land of lies;
 But as he staggered forward, Jason's hand
 Hard on the tiller steered away from land,
 And as her head a little now fell off
 Unto the wide sea, did he shout this scoff
 To Thracian Orpheus: 'Minstrel, shall we die,

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Because thou hast forgotten utterly
 What things she taught thee that men call divine,
 Or will thy measures but lead folk to wine,
 And scented beds, and not to noble deeds? 95
 Or will they fail as fail the shepherd's reeds
 Before the trumpet, when these sea-witches
 Pipe shrilly to the washing of the seas?
 I am a man, and these but beasts, but thou
 Giving these souls, that all were men ere now 100
 Shall be a very God and not a man !'

So spake he : but his fingers Orpheus ran
 Over the strings, and sighing turned away
 From that fair ending of the sunny bay ;
 But as his well-skilled hands were preluding 105
 What his heart swelled with, they began to sing
 With pleading voices from the yellow sands,
 Clustered together, with appealing hands
 Reached out to Argo as she turned away,
 While o'er their white limbs flew the flakes of spray,
 Since they spared not to set white feet among 111
 The cold waves heedless of their honied song.

Sweetly they sung, and still the answer came
 Piercing and clear from him, as bursts the flame
 From out the furnace in the moonless night ; 115
 Yet, as their words are no more known aright
 Through lapse of many ages, and no man
 Can any more across the waters wan
 Behold those singing women of the sea,
 Once more I pray you all to pardon me, 120
 If with my feeble voice and harsh I sing
 From what dim memories may chance to cling
 About men's hearts, of lovely things once sung
 Besides the sea, while yet the world was young.

The Sirens.

O happy seafarers are ye, 125
 And surely all your ills are past,
 And toil upon the land and sea,
 Since ye are brought to us at last.

To you the fashion of the world,
 Wide lands laid waste, fair cities burned, 130
 And plagues, and kings from kingdoms hurled,
 Are nought, since hither ye have turned.

Far as upon this beach we stand,
 And o'er our heads the sea-fowl flit,
 Our eyes behold a glorious land, 135
 And soon shall be ye kings of it.

Orpheus.

A little more, a little more,
 O carriers of the Golden Fleece,
 A little labour with the oar,
 Before we reach the land of Greece. 140

E'en now perchance faint rumours reach
 Men's ears of this our victory,
 And draw them down unto the beach
 To gaze across the empty sea.

But since the longed-for day is nigh, 145
 And scarce a God could stay us now,
 Why do ye hang your heads and sigh,
 Hindering for nought our eager prow?

The Sirens.

Ah, had ye chanced to reach the home
 Your fond desires were set upon, 150

Into what troubles had ye come,
What barren victory had ye won.

But now, but now, when ye have lain
Asleep with us a little while
Beneath the washing of the main, 155
How calm shall be your waking smile !

For ye shall smile to think of life
That knows no troublous change or fear,
No unavailing bitter strife, 160
That ere its time brings trouble near.

Orpheus.

Is there some murmur in your ears,
That all that we have done is nought,
And nothing ends our cares and fears,
Till the last fear on us is brought ?

The Sirens.

Alas ! and will ye stop your ears, 165
In vain desire to do aught,
And wish to live 'mid cares and fears,
Until the last fear makes you nought ?

Orpheus.

Is not the May time now on earth, 170
When close against the city wall
The folk are singing in their mirth,
While on their heads the May-flowers fall ?

The Sirens.

Yes, May is come, and its sweet breath
Shall well-nigh make you weep to-day,

And pensive with swift-coming death,
 Shall ye be satiate of the May. 175

Orpheus.

Shall not July bring fresh delight,
 As underneath green trees ye sit,
 And o'er some damsel's body white
 The noontide shadows change and flit? 180

The Sirens.

No new delight July shall bring,
 But ancient fear and fresh desire,
 And, spite of every lovely thing,
 Of July surely shall ye tire.

Orpheus.

And now when August comes on thee,
 And 'mid the golden sea of corn
 The merry reapers thou mayst see,
 Wilt thou still think the earth forlorn? 185

The Sirens.

Set flowers on thy short-lived head,
 And in thine heart forgetfulness
 Of man's hard toil, and scanty bread,
 And weary of those days no less. 190

Orpheus.

Or wilt thou climb the sunny hill,
 In the October afternoon,

To watch the purple earth's blood fill 195
 The grey vat to the maiden's tune?

The Sirens.

When thou beginnest to grow old,
 Bring back remembrance of thy bliss
 With that the shining cup doth hold,
 And weary helplessly of this. 200

Orpheus.

Or pleasureless shall we pass by
 The long cold night and leaden day,
 That song, and tale, and minstrelsy
 Shall make as merry as the May?

The Sirens.

List then to-night, to some old tale 205
 Until the tears o'erflow thine eyes;
 But what shall all these things avail,
 When sad to-morrow comes and dies?

Orpheus.

And when the world is born again,
 And with some fair love, side by side, 210
 Thou wanderest 'twixt the sun and rain,
 In that fresh love-begetting tide;

Then, when the world is born again,
 And the sweet year before thee lies,
 Shall thy heart think of coming pain, 215
 Or vex itself with memories?

The Sirens.

Ah ! then the world is born again
 With burning love unsatisfied,
 And new desires fond and vain,
 And weary days from tide to tide. 220

Ah ! when the world is born again,
 A little day is soon gone by,
 When thou, unmoved by sun or rain,
 Within a cold straight house shall lie.

Therewith they ceased awhile, as languidly 225
 The head of Argo fell off towards the sea,
 And through the water she began to go,
 For from the land a fitful wind did blow,
 That, dallying with the many-coloured sail,
 Would sometimes swell it out and sometimes fail, 230
 As nigh the east side of the bay they drew ;
 Then o'er the waves again the music flew.

The Sirens.

Think not of pleasure, short and vain,
 Wherewith, 'mid days of toil and pain,
 With sick and sinking hearts ye strive 235
 To cheat yourselves that ye may live
 With cold death ever close at hand,
 Think rather of a peaceful land,
 The changeless land where ye may be
 Roofed over by the changeful sea. 240

Orpheus.

And is the fair town nothing then,
 The coming of the wandering men

With that long talked of thing and strange,
 And news of how the kingdoms change,
 The pointed hands, and wondering
 At doers of a desperate thing? 245
 Push on, for surely this shall be
 Across a narrow strip of sea.

The Sirens.

Alas! poor souls and timorous,
 Will ye draw nigh to gaze at us 250
 And see if we are fair indeed,
 For such as we shall be your meed,
 There, where our hearts would have you go.
 And where can the earth-dwellers show
 In any land such loveliness 255
 As that wherewith your eyes we bless,
 O wanderers of the Minyae,
 Worn toilers over land and sea?

Orpheus.

Fair as the lightning thwart the sky,
 As sun-dyed snow upon the high 260
 Untrodden heaps of threatening stone
 The eagle looks upon alone,
 O fair as the doomed victim's wreath,
 O fair as deadly sleep and death,
 What will ye with them, earthly men, 265
 To mate your three-score years and ten?
 Toil rather, suffer and be free,
 Betwixt the green earth and the sea.

The Sirens.

If ye be bold with us to go,
 Things such as happy dreams may show 270

Shall your once heavy eyes behold
 About our palaces of gold;
 Where waters 'neath the waters run,
 And from o'erhead a harmless sun
 Gleams through the woods of chrysolite. 275
 There gardens fairer to the sight
 Than those of the Phaeacian king
 Shall ye behold; and, wondering,
 Gaze on the sea-born fruit and flowers,
 And thornless and unchanging bowers, 280
 Whereof the May-time knoweth nought.

So to the pillared house being brought,
 Poor souls, ye shall not be alone,
 For o'er the floors of pale blue stone
 All day such feet as ours shall pass, 285
 And, 'twixt the glimmering walls of glass,
 Such bodies garlanded with gold,
 So faint, so fair, shall ye behold,
 And clean forget the treachery
 Of changing earth and tumbling sea. 290

Orpheus.

O the sweet valley of deep grass,
 Where through the summer stream doth pass,
 In chain of shallow, and still pool,
 From misty morn to evening cool;
 Where the black ivy creeps and twines 295
 O'er the dark-armed, red-trunked pines,
 Whence clattering the pigeon flits,
 Or, brooding o'er her thin eggs, sits,
 And every hollow of the hills
 With echoing song the mavis fills. 300
 There by the stream, all unafraid,

Shall stand the happy shepherd maid,
 Alone in first of sunlit hours;
 Behind her, on the dewy flowers,
 Her homespun woollen raiment lies, 305
 And her white limbs and sweet grey eyes
 Shine from the calm green pool and deep,
 While round about the swallows sweep,
 Not silent; and would God that we,
 Like them, were landed from the sea. 310

The Sirens.

Shall we not rise with you at night,
 Up through the shimmering green twilight,
 That maketh there our changeless day,
 Then going through the moonlight grey,
 Shall we not sit upon these sands, 315
 To think upon the troublous lands,
 Long left behind, where once ye were,
 When every day brought change and fear?
 There, with white arms about you twined,
 And shuddering somewhat at the wind 320
 That ye rejoiced erewhile to meet,
 Be happy, while old stories sweet,
 Half understood, float round your ears,
 And fill your eyes with happy tears.
 Ah! while we sing unto you there, 325
 As now we sing, with yellow hair
 Blown round about these pearly limbs,
 While underneath the grey sky swims
 The light shell-sailor of the waves,
 And to our song, from the sea-filled caves 330
 Booms out an echoing harmony,
 Shall ye not love the peaceful sea?

Orpheus.

Nigh the vine-covered hillocks green,
 In days ago, have I not seen
 The brown-clad maidens amorous, 335
 Below the long rose-trellised house,
 Dance to the querulous pipe and shrill,
 When the grey shadow of the hill
 Was lengthening at the end of day?
 Not shadowy or pale were they, 340
 But limbed like those who 'twixt the trees,
 Follow the swift of Goddesses,
 Sunburnt they are somewhat, indeed,
 To where the rough brown woolen weed
 Is drawn across their bosoms sweet, 345
 Or cast from off their dancing feet;
 But yet the stars, the moonlight grey,
 The water wan, the dawn of day,
 Can see their bodies fair and white
 As Hers, who once, for man's delight, 350
 Before the world grew hard and old,
 Came o'er the bitter sea and cold;
 And surely those that met me there,
 Her handmaidens and subjects were;
 And shame-faced, half-repressed desire 355
 Had lit their glorious eyes with fire,
 That maddens eager hearts of men.
 O would that I were with them when
 The risen moon is gathering light,
 And yellow from the homestead white 360
 The windows gleam; but verily
 This waits us o'er a little sea.

The Sirens.

Come to the land where none grows old,
 And none is rash or over-bold,
 Nor any noise there is or war, 365
 Or rumour from wild lands afar,
 Or plagues, or birth and death of kings;
 No vain desire of unknown things
 Shall vex you there, no hope or fear
 Of that which never draweth near; 370
 But in that lovely land and still
 Ye may remember what ye will,
 And what ye will, forget for aye.
 So while the kingdoms pass away,
 Ye sea-beat hardened toilers erst, 375
 Unresting, for vain fame athirst
 Shall be at peace for evermore,
 With hearts fulfilled of Godlike love,
 And calm, unwavering Godlike love,
 No lapse of time can turn or move. 380
 There, ages after your fair fleece
 Is clean forgotten, yea, and Greece
 Is no more counted glorious,
 Alone with us, alone with us,
 Alone with us, dwell happily, 385
 Beneath our trembling roof of sea.

Orpheus.

Ah! do ye weary of the strife
 And long to change this eager life
 For shadowy and dull hopelessness,
 Thinking indeed to gain no less 390
 Than far from this grey light to lie,

And there to die and not to die,
 To be as if ye ne'er had been,
 Yet keep your memory fresh and green,
 To have no thought of good or ill 395
 Yet feed your fill of pleasure still?
 O idle dream! Ah, verily
 If it shall happen unto me
 That I have thought of anything,
 When o'er my bones the sea-fowl sing, 400
 And I lie dead, how shall I pine
 For those fresh joys that once were mine,
 On this green fount of joy and mirth,
 The ever young and glorious earth;
 Then, helpless, shall I call to mind 405
 Thoughts of the sweet flower-scented wind,
 The dew, the gentle rain at night,
 The wonder-working snow and white,
 The song of birds, the water's fall,
 The sun that maketh bliss of all 410
 Yea, this our toil and victory,
 The tyrannous and conquered sea.

The Sirens.

Ah, will ye go, and whither then
 Will ye go from us, soon to die,
 To fill your three-score years and ten, 415
 With many an unnamed misery?
 And this the wretchedest of all
 That when upon your lonely eyes
 The last faint heaviness shall fall
 Ye shall bethink you of your cries, 420
 Come back, nor grown old seek in vain
 To hear us sing across the sea.

Come back, come back, come back again,
Come back, O fearful Minyae!

Orpheus.

Ah, once again, ah, once again, 425
The black prow plunges through the sea,
Nor yet shall all your toil be vain
Nor ye forgot, O Minyae.

In such wise sang the Thracian, in such wise
Out gushed the Sirens' deadly melodies; 430
But long before the mingled song was done,
Back to the oars the Minyae, one by one,
Slunk silently; though many an one sighed sore,
As his strong fingers met the wood once more,
And from his breast the toilsome breathing came. 435

But as they laboured, some for very shame
Hung down their heads, and yet amongst them some
Gazed at the place whence that sweet song had come;
But round the oars and Argo's shielded side
The sea grew white, and she began to glide 440
Swift through the waters of that deadly bay;
But when a long wake now behind her lay,
And still the whistle of the wind increased,
Past shroud the mast, and all the song had ceased,
Butes rose up, the fair Athenian man, 445
And with wild eyes betwixt the rowers ran
Unto the poop and leapt into the sea;
Then all men rested on their oars, but he
Rose to the top, and towards the shore swam fast;
While all eyes watched him, who had well-nigh past
The place where sand and water 'gan to meet 451
In wreaths and ripples round the ivory feet,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

When sun-burnt swimmer, snow-white glancing limb,
And yellow sand unto their eyes grew dim,
Nor did they see their fellow any more. 455

But when they once again beheld the shore
The wind sung o'er the empty beach and bare,
And by the cliff arose into the air
A delicate and glittering little cloud,
That seemed some many-coloured sun to shroud; 460
But as the rugged cliff it drew above
The wondering Minyae beheld it move
Westward, toward Lilybaeum and the sun.

Then once more was their seaward course begun,
And soon those deadly sands were far astern, 465
Nor ever after could the heroes learn
If Butes lived or died; but old tales tell
That while the tumbling waves he breasted well,
Venus beheld him, as unseen she drew
From sunny Cyprus to the headland blue 470
Of Lilybaeum, where her temple is;
She, with a mind his sun-burnt brows to kiss,
E'en as his feet were dropping nigh the beach,
And ere his hand the deadly hands could reach,
Stooped, as the merlin stoops upon the dove, 475
And snatched him thence to be awhile her love,
Betwixt the golden pillars of her shrine,
That those who pass the Ægades see shine
From high-raised Lilybaeum o'er the sea.

But far away the sea-beat Minyae 480
Cast forth the foam, as through the growing night
They laboured ever, having small delight
In life all empty of that promised bliss,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

In love that scarce can give a dying kiss,
 In pleasure ending sweet songs with a wail, 485
 In fame that little can dead men avail,
 In vain toil struggling with the fateful stream,
 In hope, the promise of a morning dream.

Yet as night died, and the cold sea and grey
 Seemed running with them toward the dawn of day,
 Needs must they once again forget their death, 491
 Needs must they, being alive and drawing breath,
 As men who of no other life can know
 In their own minds again immortal grow.

But toward the south a little now they bent, 495
 And for awhile o'er landless sea they went
 But on the third day made another land
 At dawn of day, and thitherward did stand;
 And since the wind blew lightly from the shore,
 Somewhat abeam, they feared not with the oar 500
 To push across the shallowing sea and green,
 That washed a land the fairest they had seen,
 Whose shell-strewn beach at highest of the tide
 'Twixt sea and flowery shore was nowise wide,
 And drawn a little backward from the sea 505
 There stood a marble wall wrought cunningly,
 Rosy and white, set thick with images,
 And over-topped with heavy-fruited trees,
 Which by the shore ran, as the bay did bend,
 And to their eyes had neither gap nor end; 510
 Nor any gate: and looking over this,
 They saw a place not made for earthly bliss,
 Or eyes of dying men, for growing there
 The yellow apple and the painted pear,
 And well-filled golden cups of oranges 515

Hung amid groves of pointed cyprus trees;
 On grassy slopes the twining vine-boughs grew,
 And hoary olives 'twixt far mountains blue,
 And many-coloured flowers, like as a cloud
 The rugged southern cliffs did softly shroud; 520
 And many a green-necked bird sung to his mate
 Within the slim-leaved, thorny pomegranate,
 That flung its unstrung rubies on the grass,
 And slowly o'er the place the wind did pass
 Heavy with many odours that it bore 525
 From thymy hills down to the sea-beat shore,
 Because no flower there is, that all the year,
 From spring to autumn, beareth otherwhere,
 But there it flourished; nor the fruit alone
 From 'twixt the green leaves and the boughs outshone,
 For there each tree was ever flowering. 531

Nor was there lacking many a living thing
 Changed of its nature, for the roe-deer there
 Walked fearless with the tiger, and the bear
 Rolled sleepily upon the fruit-strewn grass, 535
 Letting the coneys o'er his rough hide pass,
 With blinking eyes, that meant no treachery.
 Careless the partridge passed the red fox by;
 Untouched the serpent left the thrushes brown,,
 And as a picture was the lion's frown. 540

But in the midst there was a grassy space,
 Raised somewhat over all the flowery place,
 On marble terrace-walls wrought like a dream;
 And round about it ran a clear blue stream, 544
 Bridged o'er with marble steps, and midmost there
 Grew a green tree, whose smooth grey boughs did bear
 Such fruit as never man elsewhere had seen,

For 'twixt the sunlight and the shadow green
 Shone out fair apples of red gleaming gold.
 Moreover round the tree, in many a fold, 550
 Lay coiled a dragon, glittering little less
 Than that which his eternal watchfulness
 Was set to guard; nor yet was he alone,
 For from the daisied grass about him shone
 Gold raiment wrapping round two damsels fair, 555
 And one upon the steps combed out her hair,
 And with shut eyes sung low as in a dream;
 And one stood naked in the cold blue stream,
 While on the bank her golden raiment lay;
 But on that noontide of the quivering day, 560
 She only, hearing the seafarers' shout,
 Her lovely golden head had turned about,
 And seen their white sail flapping o'er the wall,
 And as she turned had let her tresses fall,
 Which the thin water rippling round her knee 565
 Bore outward from her toward the restless sea.

Not long she stood, but looking seaward yet,
 From out the water made good haste to get,
 And catching up her raiment hastily,
 Ran up the marble stair, and 'gan to cry : 570
 'Wake, O my sisters, wake, for now are come
 The thieves of Æa to our peaceful home.'

Then at her voice they gat them to their feet,
 And when her raiment all her body sweet
 Once more had hidden, joining hand to hand, 575
 About the sacred apples did they stand,
 While coiled the dragon closer to the tree,
 And raised his head above them threateningly.

Meanwhile, from Argo many a sea-beat face

Gazed longingly upon that lovely place, 580
 And some their eager hands already laid
 Upon the gangway. Then Medea said :—
 'Get back unto the oars, O Minyae,
 Nor loiter here, for what have such as we
 To do herein, where, 'mid undying trees, 585
 Undying watch the wise Hesperides,
 And where the while they watch, scarce can a God
 Set foot upon the fruit-besprinkled sod
 That no snow ever covers? therefore haste,
 Nor yet in wondering your fair lives waste; 590
 For these are as the Gods, nor think of us,
 Nor to their eyes can aught be glorious
 That son of man can do; would God that I
 Could see far off the misty headland lie,
 Where we the guilt of blood shall wash away, 595
 For I grow weary of the dashing spray,
 And ceaseless roll of interwoven seas,
 And fain were sitting 'neath the whispering trees
 In homely places, where the children play, 599
 Who change like me, grow old, and die some day.'

She ceased, and little soothly did they grieve,
 For all its loveliness, that land to leave,
 For now some God has chilled their hardihead,
 And in their hearts had set a sacred dread,
 They knew not why; but on their oars they hung. 605
 A little longer as the sisters sung.

'O ye, who to this place have strayed,
 That never for man's eyes was made,
 Depart in haste, as ye have come,
 And bear back to your sea-beat home 610
 This memory of the age of gold,
 And for your eyes, grown over-bold,

Your hearts shall pay in sorrowing,
For want of many a half-seen thing.

'Lo, such as is this garden green, 615
In days past, all the world has been,
And what we know all people knew,
But this, that unto worse all grew.

'But since the golden age is gone, 620
This little place is left alone,
Unchanged, unchanging, watched of us,
The daughters of wise Hesperus.

'Surely the heavenly Messenger
Full oft is fain to enter here,
And yet without must he abide, 625
Nor longeth less the dark king's bride
To set red lips unto that fruit.
That erst made nought her mother's suit :
Here would Diana rest awhile,
Forgetful of her woodland guile, 630
Among these beasts that fear her nought.
Nor is it less in Pallas' thought,
Beneath our trees to ponder o'er
The wide, unfathomed sea of lore ;
And oft-kissed Citheraea, no less 635
Weary of love, full fain would press
These flowers with unsandalled feet.

'But unto us our rest is sweet,
Neither shall any man or God
Or lovely Goddess touch the sod 640
Where-under old times buried lie,
Before the world knew misery.

Nor will we have a slave or king,
 Nor yet will we learn anything
 But that we know, that makes us glad; 645
 While oft the very Gods are sad
 With knowing what the Fates shall do;

'Neither from us shall wisdom go
 To fill the hungering hearts of men,
 Lest to them threescore years and ten 650
 Come but to seem a little day,
 Once given, taken soon away.
 Nay, rather let them find their life
 Bitter and sweet, fulfilled of strife,
 Restless with hope, vain with regret, 655
 Trembling with fear, most strangely set
 'Twixt memory and forgetfulness;
 So more shall joy be, troubles less,
 And surely when all this is past,
 They shall not want their rest at last. 660

'Let earth and heaven go their way,
 While still we watch from day to day,
 In this green place left all alone,
 A remnant of the days long gone.'

There in the wind they hung, as word by word 665
 The clear-voiced singers silently they heard;
 But when the air was barren of their song,
 Anigh the shore they durst not linger long,
 So northward turned forewearied Argo's head,
 And dipping oars, from that fair country sped, 670
 Fulfilled of new desires and pensive thought,
 Which that day's life unto their hearts had brought.

Then hard they toiled upon the bitter sea,
 And in two days they did not fail to be

In sight of land, a headland high and blue, 675
 Which straight Milesian Erginus knew
 To be the fateful place which now they sought,
 Stormy Malea, so thitherward they brought
 The groaning ship, and casting anchor, lay
 Beneath that headland's lee, within a bay, 680
 Wherefrom the more part landed, and their feet
 Once more the happy soil of Greece did meet.

Therewith they failed not to bring ashore
 Rich robes of price and of fair arms good store,
 And gold and silver, that they there might buy 685
 What yet they lacked for their solemnity;
 Then, while upon the highest point of land
 Some built an altar, Jason with a band
 Of all the chiefest of the Minyae,
 Turned inland from the murmur of the sea. 690

Not far they went ere by a little stream
 Down in a valley they could see the gleam
 Of brazen pillars and fair-gilded vanes,
 And, dropping down by dank dark-wooded lanes
 From off the hill-side, reached a house at last 695
 Where in and out men-slaves and women passed,
 And guests were streaming fast into the hall
 Where now the oaken boards were laid for all.
 With these the Minyae went, and soon they were
 Within a pillared hall both great and fair, 700
 Where folk already sat beside the board,
 And on the dais was an ancient Lord.

But when these saw the fearless Minyae
 Glittering in arms, they sprang up hastily,
 And each man turned about unto the wall 705

To seize his spear or staff : then through the hall
 Jason cried out : 'Laconians, fear ye not,
 Nor leave the flesh-meat while it yet is hot
 For dread of us, for we are men as ye,
 And I am Jason of the Minyae, 710
 And come from Æea to the land of Greece,
 And in my ship bear back the Golden Fleece,
 And a fair Colchian queen to fill my bed.
 And now we pray to share your wine and bread,
 And other things we need, and at our hands 715
 That ye will take fair things of many lands.'

'Sirs,' said the ancient lord, 'be welcome here,
 Come up and sit by me, and make such cheer
 As here ye can : glad am I that to me
 The first of Grecian men from off the sea 720
 Ye now are come.'

Therewith the great hall rang
 With joyful shouts, and as, with clash and clang
 Of well-wrought arms, up to the dais they went,
 All eyes upon the Minyae were bent,
 Nor could they have enough of wondering 725
 At this or that sea-tossed victorious king.

So with the strangers there they held high feast,
 And afterwards, the slaves drove many a beast
 Down to the shore, and carried back again
 Great store of precious things in pack and wain; 730
 Wrought gold and silver, gems, full many a bale
 Of scarlet cloth, and fine silk, fit to veil
 The perfect limbs of dreaded Goddesses;
 'Spices fresh-gathered from the outland trees,

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And arms well-wrought, and precious scarce-known
wine,
 And carven images well-nigh divine.

So when all folk with these were satisfied,
Back went the Minyae to the water-side,
And with them that old lord, fain to behold
Victorious Argo and the Fleece of Gold. 740
And so aboard amid the oars he lay
Throughout the night, and at the dawn of day
Did all men land, nor spared that day to wear
The best of all they had of gold-wrought gear,
And every one, being crowned with olive grey, 745
Up to the headland did they take their way,
Where now already stood the crowned priests
About the altars by the gilt-horned beasts.
There as the fair sun rose, did Jason break
Over the altar the thin barley-cake, 750
And cast the salt abroad, and there were slain
The milk-white bulls, and there red wine did rain
On to the fire from out the ancient jar,
And high rose up the red flame, seen afar
From many another headland of that shore, 755
And through its fitful crackling and its roar,
From time to time in pleading song and prayer,
Swept by the wind about the summer air,
Clear rung the voices of the Minyae
Unto the dashing of the conquered sea, 760
That far below thrust on by tide and wind
The crumbling bases of the headland mined.

ROBERT BRIDGES

ON A DEAD CHILD

PERFECT little body, without fault or stain on thee,
With promise of strength and manhood full and fair!
Though cold and stark and bare,
The bloom and the charm of life doth awhile remain on
thee.

Thy mother's treasure wert thou;—alas! no longer 5
To visit her heart with wondrous joy; to be
Thy father's pride;—ah, he
Must gather his faith together, and his strength make
stronger.

To me, as I move thee now in the last duty,
Dost thou with a turn or gesture anon respond; 10
Startling my fancy fond
With a chance attitude of the head, a freak of beauty.

Thy hand clasps, as 'twas wont, my finger, and holds
it:
But the grasp is the clasp of Death, heartbreaking
and stiff;
Yet feels to my hand as if 15
'Twas still thy will, thy pleasure and trust that enfolds
it.

So I lay thee there, thy sunken eyelids closing,—
Go lie thou there in thy coffin, thy last little bed!—
Propping thy wise, sad head,
Thy firm, pale hands across thy chest disposing. 20

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

So quiet! doth the change content thee?—Death,
whither hath he taken thee?

To a world, do I think, that rights the disaster of
this?

The vision of which I miss,
Who weep for the body, and wish but to warm thee
and awaken thee?

Ah! little at best can all our hopes avail us

To lift this sorrow, or cheer us, when in the dark,

Unwilling, alone we embark,

And the things we have seen and have known and have
heard of, fail us.

THERE IS A HILL

THERE is a hill beside the silver Thames,
Shady with birch and beech and odorous pine :
And brilliant underfoot with thousand gems
Steeply the thickets to his floods decline.

Straight trees in every place 5
Their thick tops interlace,
And pendent branches trail their foliage fine
Upon his watery face.

Swift from the sweltering pasturage he flows :
His stream, alert to seek the pleasant shade, 10
Pictures his gentle purpose, as he goes
Straight to the caverned pool his toil has made.

His winter floods lay bare
The stout roots in the air :
His summer streams are cool, when they have played 16
Among their fibrous hair.

A rushy island guards the sacred bower,
And hides it from the meadow, where in peace
The lazy cows wrench many a scented flower,
Robbing the golden market of the bees : 20

And laden barges float
By banks of myosote;
And scented flag and golden flower-de-lys
Delay the loitering boat.

And on this side the island, where the pool 25
Eddies away, are tangled mass on mass
The water-weeds, that net the fishes cool,

And scarce allow a narrow stream to pass;
 Where spreading crowfoot mars
 The drowning nenuphars, 30
 Waving the tassels of her silken grass
 Below her silver stars.

But in the purple pool there nothing grows,
 Not the white water-lily spoked with gold;
 Though best she loves the hollows, and well knows 35
 On quiet streams her broad shields to unfold:
 Yet should her roots but try
 Within these deeps to lie,
 Not her long reaching stalk could ever hold
 Her waxen head so high. 40

Sometimes an angler comes, and drops his hook
 Within its hidden depths, and 'gainst a tree
 Leaning his rod, reads in some pleasant book,
 Forgetting soon his pride of fishery;
 And dreams, or falls asleep, 45
 While curious fishes peep
 About his nibbled bait, or scornfully
 Dart off and rise and leap.

And sometimes a slow figure 'neath the trees,
 In ancient-fashioned smock, with tottering care 50
 Upon a staff propping his weary knees,
 May by the pathway of the forest fare:
 As from a buried day
 Across the mind will stray
 Some perishing mute shadow,—and unaware 55
 He passeth on his way.

Else, he that wishes solitude is safe,
 Whether he bathe at morning in the stream:

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Or lead his love there when the hot hours chafe
The meadows, busy with a blurring steam; 60
 Or watch, as fades the light,
 The gibbous moon grow bright,
Until her magic rays dance in a dream,
 And glorify the night.

Where is this bower beside the silver Thames?
O pool and flowery thickets, hear my vow! 65
O trees of freshest foliage and straight stems,
No sharer of my secret I allow:
 Lest ere I come the while
 Strange feet your shades defile; 70
Or lest the burly oarsman turn his prow
 Within your guardian isle.

D. H. LAWRENCE

MAN AND BAT

WHEN I went into my room, at mid-morning,
Say ten o'clock.....
My room, a crash-box over that great stone rattle
The Via de' Bardi.....

When I went into my room at mid-morning, 5
Why?.....a bird!

A bird
Flying round the room in insane circles.

In insane circles!
.....A bat! 10

A disgusting bat
At mid-morning!.....

Out! Go out!

Round and round and round
With a twitchy, nervous, intolerable flight, 15
And a neurasthenic lunge,
And an impure frenzy;
A bat, big as a swallow.

Out, out of my room!

The Venetian shutters I push wide 20
To the free, calm upper air;
Loop back the curtains.....

Now out, out from my room !

So to drive him out, flicking with my white hand-
kerchief ; Go !

But he will not. 25

Round and round and round
In an impure haste,
Fumbling, a beast in air,
And stumbling, lunging and touching the walls, the
bell-wires

About my room ! 30

Always refusing to go out into the air,
Above that crash-gulf of the Via de' Bardi,
Yet blind with frenzy, with cluttered fear.

At last he swerved into the window bay,
But blew back, as if an incoming wind blew him in
again.

A strong inrushing wind. 36

And round and round and round !
Blundering more insane, and leaping, in throbs, to
clutch at a corner

At a wire, at a bell-rope :
On and on, watched relentless by me, round and round
in my room,

Round and round and dithering with tiredness and
haste and increasing delirium

Flicker-splashing round my room. 42

I would not let him rest ;
Not one instant cleave, cling like a blot with his breast
to the wall

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

In an obscure corner. 45
Not an instant !

I flicked him on,
Trying to drive him through the window.

Again he swerved into the window bay
And I ran forward, to frighten him forth, 50
But he rose, and from a terror worse than me he flew
Back into my room, and round, round, round in my
room

Clutch, cleave, stagger,
Dropping about the air,
Getting tired. 55

Something seemed to blow him back from the window
Every time he swerved at it;
Back on a strange parabola, then round, round, dizzy
in my room.

He could not go out,
I also realised..... 60
It was the light of day which he could not enter,
Any more than I could enter the white-hot door of a
blast furnace.

He could not plunge into the daylight that streamed
at the window.
It was asking too much of his nature.

Worse even than the hideous terror of me with my
handkerchief
Saying: out, go out!..... 66
Was the horror of white daylight in the window !

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

So I switched on the electric light, thinking: Now
The outside will seem brown.....

But no. 70
The outside did not seem brown.
And he did not mind the yellow electric light.

Silent!
He was having a silent rest.
But never! 75
Not in my room.

Round and round and round
Near the ceiling as if in a web,
Staggering;
Plunging, falling out of the web, 80
Broken in heaviness,
Lunging blindly,
Heavier;
And clutching, clutching for one second's pause,
Always, as if for one drop of rest, 85
One little drop.

And I!
Never, I say.....
Go out!

Flying slower, 90
Seeming to stumble, to fall in air,
Blind weary.

Yet never able to pass the whiteness of light into
freedom... ..
A bird would have dashed through, come what might.

Fall, sink, lurch, and round and round 95
 Flicker, flicker-heavy;
 Even wings heavy :
 And cleave in a high corner for a second, like a clot,
 also a prayer.

But no.
 Out, you beast. 100

Till he fell in a corner, palpitating, spent.
 And there, a clot, he squatted and looked at me.
 With sticking-out, bead-berry eyes, black,
 And improper derisive ears,
 And shut wings, 105
 And brown, furry body.

Brown, not-brown, fine fur !
 But it might as well have been hair on a spider ; thing
 With long, black-paper ears.

So, a dilemma ! 110
 He squatted there like something unclean.

No, he must not squat, nor hang, obscene, in my room !

Yet nothing on earth will give him courage to pass the
 sweet fire of day.

What then ?
 Hit him and kill him and throw him away ? 115

Nay,
 I didn't create him.
 Let the God that created him be responsible for his
 death.....

Only, in the bright day, I will not have this clot in
my room.

Let the God who is maker of bats watch with them
in their unclean corners.....

I admit a God in every crevice,
But not bats in my room;
Nor the God of bats, while the sun shines. 121

So out, out, you brute!.....

And he lunged, flight-heavy, away from me, sideways,
a sghembo!

And round and round and round my room, a clot with
wings,

Impure even in weariness. 127

Wings dark skinny and flapping the air,
Lost their flicker.
Spent. 130

He fell again with a little thud
Near the curtain on the floor,
And there lay.

Ah death, death
You are no solution!
Bats must be bats. 135

Only life has a way out.
And the human soul is fated to wide-eyed responsibility
In life.

So I picked him up in a flannel jacket,
Well covered, lest he should bite me. 140

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

For I would have had to kill him if he'd bitten me,
the impure one.....
And he hardly stirred in my hand, muffled up.

Hastily, I shook him out of the window.

And away he went !
 Fear craven in his tail.
 Great haste, and straight, almost bird straight above
 the Via de' Bardi.
 Above that crash-gulf of exploding whips,
 Towards the Borgo San Jacopo.

And now, at evening, as he flickers over the river
Dipping with petty triumphant flight, and tittering
over the sun's departure,
I believe he chirps, pipistrello, seeing me here on this
terrace writing :

There he sits, the long loud one !
But I am great than he.....
I escaped him.....

55

Florence.

SNAKE

A SNAKE came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark
carob-tree

I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was
at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth wall in the
gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied
down, over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a
small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack
long body.
Silently :

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and
mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning
bowels of the earth 20
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The Voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the
gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish
him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet to
 drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth? 30

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
Was it perversity that I longed to talk to him?
Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices : 35
If you were not afraid, you would kill him !
And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth. 40
He drank enough

And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the
air, so black,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air, 45
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders,
and entered farther,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his with-
drawing into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly
drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher. 55
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind
 convulsed in undignified haste.
Writhed like lightning, and was gone 60
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-
 front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with
 fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human
education. 65

And I thought of the Albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

70

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate;
A pettiness.

Taormina.

RUDYARD KIPLING

SUSSEX

GOD gave all men all earth to love,
But since our hearts are small,
Ordained for each one spot should prove
Belovèd over all;

That, as He watched Creation's birth, 5
So we, in godlike mood,
May of our love create our earth
And see that it is good.

So one shall Baltic pines content,
As one some Surrey glade. 10

Or one the palm-grove's droned lament
Before Levuka's trade.

Each to his choice, and I rejoice
The lot has fallen to me
In a fair ground—in a fair ground— 15
Yea, Sussex by the Sea!

No tender-hearted garden crowns,
No bosomed woods adorn
Our blunt, bow-headed, whale-backed Downs,
But gnarled the writhen thorn— 20
Bare slopes where chasing shadows skim,
And, through the gaps revealed,
Belt upon belt, the wooded, dim
Blue goodness of the Weald.

Clean of officious fence or hedge, 25
Half-wild and wholly tame,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

- The wise turf cloaks the white cliff edge
 As when the Romans came.
 What sign of those that fought and died
 At shift of sword and sword? 30
 The barrow and the camp abide,
 The sunlight and the sward.
- Here leaps ashore the full Sou'west
 All heavy-winged with brine,
 Here lies above the folded crest 35
 The Channel's leaden line;
 And here the sea-fogs lap and cling,
 And here, each warning each,
 The sheep-bells and the ship-bells ring
 Along the hidden beach. 40
- We have no waters to delight
 Our broad and brookless vales—
 Only the dewpond on the height,
 Unfed, that never fails—
 Whereby no tattered herbage tells 45
 Which way the season flies—
 Only our close-bit thyme that smells
 Like dawn in Paradise.
- Here through the strong and shadeless days
 The tinkling silence thrills; 50
 Or little, lost, Down churches praise
 The Lord who made the hills:
 But here the Old Gods guard their round,
 And, in her secret heart,
 The heathen kingdom Wilfrid found 55
 Dreams, as she dwells, apart.
- Though all the rest were all my share,
 With equal soul I'd see

Her nine-and-thirty sisters fair, 60
 Yet none more fair than she.
 Choose ye your need from Thames to Tweed
 And I will choose instead
 Such lands as lie 'twixt Rake and Rye,
 Black down and Beachy Head. 65

I will go out against the sun
 Where the rolled scrap retires,
 And the Long Man of Wilmington
 Looks naked toward the shires;
 And east till doubling Rother crawls 70
 To find the fickle tide,
 By dry sea-forgotten walls,
 Our ports of stranded pride.

I will go north about the shaws
 And the deep ghylls that breed 75
 Huge oaks and old, the which he hold
 No more than Sussex weed;
 Or south where windy Piddinghoe's
 Begilded dolphin veers,
 And black beside wide-bankèd Ouse 80
 Lie down our Sussex steers.

So to the land our hearts we give
 Till the sure magic strike,
 And Memory, Use, and Love make live
 Us and our fields alike— 85
 That deeper than our speech and thought,
 Beyond our reason's sway,
 Clay of the pit whence we were wrought
 Yearns to its fellow-clay.

- God gives all men all earth to love, 90
But since man's heart is small,
Ordains for each one spot shall prove
Beloved over all.
Each to his choice, and I rejoice
The lot has fallen to me 95
In a fair ground—in a fair ground—
Yea, Sussex by the sea !

JOHN MASEFIELD

SEA-FEVER

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea
and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white
sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn
breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the
running tide 5
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds
flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the
sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again to the vagrant gypsy
life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's
like a whetted knife; 10
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-
rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long
trick's over.

C. L. M.

I N the dark womb where I began
My mother's life made me a man.
Through all the months of human birth
Her beauty fed my common earth.
I cannot see, nor breathe, nor stir, 5
But through the death of some of her.

Down in the darkness of the grave
She cannot see the life she gave.
For all her love, she cannot tell
Whether I use it ill or well, 10
Nor knock at dusty doors to find
Her beauty dusty in the mind.

If the grave's gates could be undone,
She would not know her little son,
I am so grown. If we should meet 15
She would pass by me in the street,
Unless my soul's face let her see
My sense of what she did for me.

What have I done to keep in mind
My debt to her and womankind? 20
What woman's happier life repays
Her for those months of wretched days?
For all my mouthless body leeches
Ere Birth's releasing hell was reached?

What have I done, or tried, or said 25
In thanks to that dear woman dead?

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Men triumph over women still,
Men trample women's rights at will,
And man's lust roves the world untamed.

* * * * *

O grave, shut lest be I shamed.

30

W. B. YEATS

THE ROSE OF THE WORLD

WHO dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?
For these red lips, with all their mournful pride,
Mournful that no new wonder may betide,
Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam,
And Usna's children died.

5

We and the labouring world are passing by :
Amid men's souls, that waver and give place
Like the pale waters in their wintry race,
Under the passing stars, foam of the sky,
Lives on this lonely face.

10

Bow down, archangels, in your dim abode :
Before you were, or any hearts to beat,
Weary and kind one lingered by His seat ;
He made the world to be a grassy road
Before her wandering feet.

15

THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE

I WILL arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles
made:
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey
bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes
dropping slow, 5
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the
cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple
glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore; 10
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements
grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

HILAIRE BELLOC

THE SOUTH COUNTRY

WHEN I am living in the Midlands
That are sodden and unkind,

I light my lamp in the evening :

My work is left behind ;

And the great hills of the South Country

5

Come back into my mind.

The great hills of the South Country

They stand along the sea ;

And it's there walking in the high woods

10

: That I could wish to be,

And the men that were boys when I was a boy

Walking along with me.

The men that live in North England

I saw them for a day :

Their hearts are set upon the waste fells,

15

Their skies are fast and grey ;

From their castle-walls a man may see

The mountains far away.

The men that live in West England

They see the Severn strong,

A-rolling on rough water brown

20

Light aspen leaves along.

They have the secret of the Rocks,

And the oldest kind of song.

But the men that live in the South Country

25

Are the kindest and most wise,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

They get their laughter from the loud surf,
 And the faith in their happy eyes
 Comes surely from our sister the Spring
 When over the sea she flies; 30
 The violets suddenly bloom at her feet,
 She blesses us with surprise.

I never get between the pines
 But I smell the Sussex air;
 Nor I never come on a belt of sand 35
 But my home is there.
 And along the sky the line of the Downs
 So noble and so bare.

A lost thing could I never find,
 Nor a broken thing mend: 40
 And I fear I shall be all alone
 When I get towards the end.
 Who will there be to comfort me
 Or who will be my friend?

I will gather and carefully make my friends 45
 Of the men of the Sussex Weald,
 They watch the stars from silent folds,
 They stiffly plough the field.
 By them and the God of the South Country
 My poor soul shall be healed. 50

If ever I become a rich man,
 Or if ever I grow to be old,
 I will build a house with deep thatch
 To shelter me from the cold,
 And there shall the Sussex songs be sung 55
 And the story of Sussex told.

I will hold my house in the high wood
Within a walk of the sea,
And the men that were boys when I was a boy
Shall sit and drink with me.

60

WALTER DE LA MARE

MISS LOO

WHEN thin-strewn memory I look through,
I see most clearly poor Miss Loo,
Her tabby cat, her cage of birds,
Her nose, her hair, her muffled words,
And how she would open her green eyes, 5
As if in some immense surprise,
Whenever as we sat at tea
She made some small remark to me.

'Tis always drowsy summer when
From out the past she comes again; 10
The westering sunshine in a pool
Floats in her parlour still and cool;
While the slim bird its lean wires shakes,
As into piercing song it breaks;
Till Peter's pale-green eyes ajar 15
Dream, wake; wake, dream, in one brief bar.
And I am sitting, dull and shy,
And she with gaze of vacancy,
And large hands folded on the tray,
Musing the afternoon away; 20
Her satin bosom heaving slow
With sighs that softly ebb and flow,
And her plain face in such dismay,
It seems unkind to look her way :
Until all cheerful back will come 25
Her gentle gleaming spirit home :
And one would think that poor Miss Loo
Asked nothing else, if she had you.

THE SLEEPER

As Ann came in one summer's day,
She felt that she must creep,
So silent was the clear cool house,
It seemed a house of sleep.
And sure, when she pushed open the door, 5
Rapt in the stillness there,
Her mother sat, with stooping head,
Asleep upon a chair;
Fast—fast asleep; her two hands laid
Loose—folded on her knee, 10
So that her small unconscious face
Looked half unreal to be:
So calmly lit with sleep's pale light
Each feature was; so fair
Her forehead—every trouble was 15
Smoothed out beneath her hair.
But though her mind in dream now moved,
Still seemed her gaze to rest—
From out beneath her fast-sealed lids,
Above her moving breast— 20
On Ann: as quite, quite still she stood;
Yet slumber lay so deep
Even her hands upon her lap
Seemed saturate with sleep.
And as Ann peeped, a cloudlike dread 25
Stole over her, and then,
On stealthy, mouselike feet she trod,
And tiptoed out again.

ARABIA

FAR are the shades of Arabia,
Where the Princes ride at noon,
'Mid the verdurous vales and thickets,
Under the ghost of the moon;
And so dark is that vaulted purple
Flowers in the forest rise
And toss into blossom 'gainst the phantom stars
Pale in the noonday skies. 5

Sweet is the music of Arabia
In my heart, when out of dreams
I still in the thin clear mirk of dawn
Descry her gliding streams;
Hear her strange lutes on the green banks
Ring loud with the grief and delight
Of the dim-silked, dark-haired Musicians
In the brooding silence of night. 10 15

They haunt me—her lutes and her forests;
No beauty on earth I see
But shadowed with that dreams recalls
Her loveliness to me:
Still eyes look coldly upon me,
Cold voices whisper and say—
He is crazed with the spell of far Arabia,
They have stolen his wits away.' 20

FAREWELL

WHEN I lie where shades of darkness
Shall no more assail mine eyes,
Nor the rain make lamentation
 When the wind sighs;
How will fare the world whose wonder
Was the very proof of me?
Memory fades, must the remembered
 Perishing be?

Oh, when this my dust surrenders
Hand, foot, lip, to dust again, 10
May the rusting harvest hedgerow
Please other men!
May the rusting harvest hedgerow
Still the Traveller's Joy entwine,
And as happy children gather 15
Posies once mine.

Look thy last on all things lovely,
Every hour. Let no night
Seal thy sense in deathly slumber
Till to delight
Thou have paid thy utmost blessing;
Since that all things thou wouldst praise
Beauty took from those who loved them
In other days.

THE SCRIBE

WHAT lovely things
Thy hand hath made :
The smooth-plumed bird .
In its emerald shade,
The seed of the grass,
The speck of stone
Which the wayfaring ant
Stirs—and hastes on !

5

Though I should sit
By some tarn in thy hills,
Using its ink
As the spirit wills
To write of Earth's wonders,
Its live, willed things,
Flit would the ages
On soundless wings
Ere unto Z
My pen draw nigh ;
Leviathan told,
And the honey-fly :
And still would remain
My wit to try—
My worn reeds broken,
The dark tarn dry,
All words forgotten—
Thou, Lord, and I.

10

15

20

25

HAROLD MONRO

JOURNEY

I

How many times I nearly miss the train
By running up the staircase once again
For some dear trifle almost left behind.
At that last moment the unwary mind
Forgets the solemn tick of station-time; 5
The muddy lane the feet must climb—
The bridge—the ticket—signal down—
Train just emerging beyond the town :
The great blue engine panting as it takes
The final curve, and grinding on its brakes 10
Up to the platform-edge.....The little doors
Swing open, while the burly porter roars.
The tight compartment fills : our careful eyes.
Go to explore each others' destinies.
A lull. The station-master waves. The train 15
Gathers, and grips, and takes the rails again,
Moves to the shining open land, and soon
Begins to tittle-tattle a tame tattooon.

II

They ramble through the country-side,
Dear gentle monsters, and we ride 20
Pleasantly seated—so we sink
Into a torpor on the brink
Of thought, or read our books; and understand
Half them and half the backward-gliding land :
(Trees in a dance all twirling round; 25

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Large rivers flowing with no sound ;
 The scattered images of town and field,
 Shining flowers half concealed.)
 And, having settled to an equal rate,
 They swing the curve and straighten to the straight, 30
 Curtail their stride and gather up their joints,
 Snort, dwindle their steam for the noisy points,
 Leap them in safety, and, the other side,
 Loop again to an even stride.

The long train moves : we move in it along. 35
 Like an old ballad, or an endless song,
 It drones and wimbles in unwearied croon—
 Croons, drones, and mumbles all the afternoon.

Towns with their fifty chimneys close and high,
 Wreathed in great smoke between the earth and sky, 40
 It hurtles through them, and you think it must
 Halt—but it shrieks and sputters them with dust,
 Cracks like a bullet through their big affairs,
 Rushes the station-bridge, and disappears
 Out to the suburb, laying bare 45
 Each garden trimmed with pitiful care ;
 Children are caught at idle play,
 Held a moment, and thrown away.
 Nearly everyone looks round.
 Some dignified inhabitant is found 50
 Right in the middle of the commonplace—
 Buttoning his trousers, or washing his face.

III

Oh the wild engine ! Every time I sit
 In any train I must remember it.
 The way it smashes through the air ; its great 55

Petulant majesty and terrible rate :
 Driving the ground before it, with those round
 Feet pounding, beating, covering the ground ;
 The piston using up the white steam so
 You cannot watch it when it come or go ; 60
 The cutting, the embankment ; how it takes
 The tunnels, and the clatter that it makes ;
 So careful of the train and of the track,
 Guiding us out, or helping us go back ;
 Breasting its destination : at the close 65
 Yawning, and slowly dropping to a doze.

IV

We who have looked each other in the eyes
 This journey long, and trundled with the train,
 Now to our separate purposes must rise,
 Becoming decent strangers once again. 70
 The little chamber we have made our home
 In which we so conveniently abode,
 The complicated journey we have come,
 Must be an unremembered episode.
 Our common purpose made us all like friends. 75
 How suddenly it ends !
 A nod, a murmur, or a little smile,
 Or often nothing, and away we file.

I hate to leave you, comrades. I will stay
 To watch you drift apart and pass away. 80
 It seems impossible to go and meet
 All those strange eyes of people in the street.
 But, like some proud unconscious god, the train
 Gathers us up and scatters us again.

SOLITUDE

WHEN you have tidied all things for the night,
And while your thoughts are fading to their sleep,
You'll pause a moment in the late firelight,
Too sorrowful to weep.

The large and gentle furniture has stood 5
In sympathetic silence all the day
With that old kindness of domestic wood;
Nevertheless the haunted room will say:
"Some one must be away."

The little dog rolls over half awake, 10
Stretches his paws, yawns, looking up at you,
Wags his tail very slightly for your sake,
That you may feel he is unhappy too.

A distant engine whistles, or the floor
Creaks, or the wandering night-wind bangs a door. 15

Silence is scattered like a broken glass.
The minutes prick their ears and run about,
Then one by one subside again and pass
Sedately in, monotonously out.

You bend your head and wipe away a tear. 20
Solitude walks one heavy step more near.

WILFRED OWEN

STRANGE MEETING

1918

IT seemed that out of the battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which Titanic wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred. 5
Then, as I probed them, one sprang, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands as if to bless;
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall.
With a thousand fears that vision's face was grained; 10
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
"None," said the other, "Save the undone years,
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
"Strange, friend," I said, "Here is no cause to mourn,"
"None," said the other, "Save the undone years, 15
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
But mocks the steady running of the hour, 20
And if it grieves, richer than here.
For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something has been left
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled. 25
Now men will go content with what we spoiled,
Or, discontent, boil bloody and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

None will break ranks, though nations trek from
progress.

Courage was mine, and I had mystery, 30
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery;
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-

wheels
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells, 35
Even with truths that be too deep for taint.

I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.

I am the enemy you killed, my friend. 40
I knew you in this death: for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now....."

EDWARD SHANKS

THE SWIMMERS

THE cove's a shining plate of blue and green,
With darker belts between
The trough and crest of the slow-rising swell,
And the great rocks throw purple shadows down,
Where transient sun-sparks wink and burst and drown 5
And glimmering pebbles lie too deep to tell,
Hidden or shining as the shadow wavers.
And everywhere the restless sun-steeped air
Trembles and quavers,
As though it were 10
More saturate with light than it could bear.

Now come the swimmers from slow-dripping caves,
Where the shy fern creeps under the veined roof,
And wading out meet with glad breast the waves.
One holds aloof, 15
Climbing alone the reef with shrinking feet,
That scarce endure the jagged stones' dull beat,
Till on the edge he poises
And flies to cleave the water, vanishing
In wreaths of white, with echoing liquid noises, 20
And swims beneath, a vague, distorted thing.
Now all the other swimmers leave behind
The crystal shallow and the foam-wet shore,
And sliding into deeper water find
A living coolness in the lifting flood, 25
And through their bodies leaps the sparkling blood,
So that they feel the faint earth's drought no more.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

There now they float, heads raised above the green,
 White bodies cloudily seen,
 Farther and farther from the brazen rock, 30
 On which the hot air shakes, on which the tide
 Fruitlessly throws with gentle, soundless shock
 The cool and lagging wave. Out, out they go,
 And now upon a mirrored cloud they ride
 Or turning over, with soft strokes and slow, 35
 Slide on like shadows in a tranquil sky.
 Behind them, on the tall, parched cliff, the dry
 And dusty grasses grow
 In shallow ledges of the arid stone,
 Starving for coolness and the touch of rain 40
 But, though to earth they must return again,
 Here come the soft sea-air to meet them, blown
 Over the surface of the outer deep,
 Scarce moving, staying, falling, straying, gone,
 Light and delightful as the touch of sleep..... 45
 One wakes and splashes round.
 And, as by magic, all the others wake
 From that sea-dream, and now with rippling sound
 Their rapid arms the enchanted silence break.
 And now again the crystal shallows take 50
 The gleaming bodies whose cool hour is done;
 They pause upon the beach, they pause and sigh
 Then vanish in the caverns one by one.

Soon the wet foot-marks on the stones are dry :
 The cove sleeps on beneath the unwavering sun. 55

EDMUND BLUNDEN

ALMSWOMEN

A^T Quincey's moat the squandering village ends,
And there in the almshouse dwell the dearest
friends

Of all the village, two old dames that cling
As close as any true-loves in the spring.
Long, long ago they passed threescore-and-ten, 5
And in this doll's house lived together then ;
All things they have in common, being so poor,
And their one fear, Death's shadow at the door.
Each sundown makes them mournful, each sunrise
Brings back the brightness in their failing eyes. 10

How happy go the rich fair-weather days
When on the roadside folk stare in amaze
At such a honeycomb of fruit and flowers
As mellows round their threshold ; what long hours
They gloat upon their steeping hollyhocks, 15
Bee's balsams, feathery southernwood, and stocks,
Fiery dragon's-mouths, great mallow leaves
For salves, and lemon-plants in bushy sheaves,
Shagged Esau's-hands with fine green finger-tips, 20
Such old sweet names are ever on their lips.
As pleased as little children where these grow
In cobbled pattens and worn gowns they go,
Proud of their wisdom when on gooseberry shoots
They stuck eggshells to fright from coming fruits
The brisk-billed rascals; pausing still to see 25
Their neighbour owls saunter from tree to tree,

Or in the hushing half-light mouse the lane
Long-winged and lordly.

But when the hours wane,
Indoors they ponder, scared by the harsh storm
Whose pelting saracens on the window swarm, 30
And listen for the mail to clatter past
And church clock's deep bay withering on the blast;
They feed the fire that flings a freakish light
On pictured kings and queens grotesquely bright,
Platters and pitchers, faded calendars 35
And graceful hour-glass trim with lavenders.

Many a time they kiss and cry, and pray
That both be summoned in the self-same day,
And wiseman linnet tinkling in his cage
End too with them the friendship of old age, 40
And all together leave their treasured room
Some bell-like evening when the may's in bloom.

LAURENCE BINYON

ASOKA

I

GENTLE as fine rain falling from the night,
The first beams from the Indian moon at full
Steal through the boughs, and brighter and more bright
Glide like a breath, a fragrance visible.
Asoka round him sees 5
The gloom ebb into the glories half-espied
Of glimmering bowers through wavering traceries :
Pale as a rose by magical degrees
Opening, the air breaks into beauty wide,
And yields a mystic sweet; 10
And shapes of leaves shadow the pathway side
Around Asoka's feet.

O happy prince! From his own court he steals:
Weary of words is he, weary of throngs.
How this wide ecstasy of stillness heals 15
His heart of flatteries and the tale of wrongs!
Unseen he climbs the hill,
Unheard he brushes with his cloak the dew,
While the young moonbeams every hollow fill
With hovering flowers, so gradual and so still 20
As if a joy brimmed where that radiance grew,
Discovering pale gold
Of spikenard balls and champak buds that new
Upon the air unfold.

He gains the ridge. Wide open rolls the night! 25
Airs from an infinite horizon blow

Down holy Ganges, floating vast and bright
 Through old Magadha's forests. Far below
 He hears the cool wave fret
 On rocky islands; soft as moths asleep 30
 Come moonlit sails; there on a parapet
 Of ruined marble, where the moss gleams wet
 And from black cedars a lone peacock cries,
 Uncloaking rests Asoka, bathing deep
 In silence, and his eyes 35
 Of his own realm the wondrous prospect reap;
 At last aloud he sighs.

II

"How ennobling it is to taste
 Of the breath of a living power!
 The shepherd boy on the waste 40
 Whose converse, hour by hour,
 Is alone with the stars and the sun,
 His days are glorified!
 And the steersman floating on
 Down this great Ganges tide, 45
 He is blest to be companion of the might
 Of waters and unwearied winds that run
 With him, by day, by night:
 He knows not whence they come, but they his path
 provide.

"But O more noble far 50
 From the heart of power to proceed
 As the beam flows forth from the star,
 As the flower unfolds on the reed.
 It is not we that are strong
 But the cause, the divine desire, 55

The longing wherewith we long.
 O flame far-springing from the eternal fire,
 Feed, feed upon my heart till thou consume
 These bonds that do me wrong
 Of time and chance and doom, 60
 And I into thy radiance grow and glow entire !

“For he who his own strength trusts,
 And by violence hungers to tame
 Men and the earth to his lusts,
 Though mighty, he falls in shame; 65
 As a great fell tiger, whose sound
 The small beasts quake to hear,
 When he stretches his throat to the shuddering ground
 And roars for blood; yet a trembling deer
 Brings him at last to his end. 70
 In a winter torrent falls his murderous bound !
 His raging claws the unheeding waters rend;
 Down crags they toss him sheer,
 With sheep ignobly drowned,
 And his fierce heart is burst with fury of its fear. 75

III

“Not so ye deal,
 Immortal Powers, with him
 Who in his weak hour hath made haste to kneel
 Where your divine springs out of mystery brim,
 And carries thence through the world's uproar rude 80
 A clear-eyed fortitude;
 As the poor diver on the Arabian strand
 From the scorched rocky ledges plunging deep,
 Glides down the rough, dark brine with questing hand
 Until he feels upleap 85

Founts of fresh water, and his goatskin swells
 And bears him upward on those buoyant wells
 Back with a cool boon for his thirsting land.

"I also thirst,
 O living springs, for you : 90
 Would that I might drink now, as when at first
 Life shone about me glorious and all true,
 And I abounded in your strength indeed,
 Which now I sorely need.
 You have not failed, 'tis I ! Yet this abhorred 95
 Necessity to hate and to despise—
 'Twas not for this my youthful longing soared,
 Not thus would I grow wise !
 Keep my heart tender still, that still is set
 To love without foreboding or regret, 100
 Even as this tender moonlight is outpoured.

"Now now, even now,
 Sleep doth the sad world take
 To peace it knows not. Radiant Sleep, wilt thou
 Unveil thy wonder for me too, who wake ? 105
 O my soul melts into immensity,
 And yet 'tis I, 'tis I !
 A wave upon a silent ocean, thrilled
 Up from its deepest deeps without a sound,
 Without a shore to break on, or a bound, 110
 Until the world be filled.
 O mystery of peace, O more profound
 Than pain or joy, upbuey me on thy power !
 Stay, stay, adored hour,
 I am lost, I am found again : 115
 "My soul is as a fountain springing in the rain."

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

—Long, long upon that cedarn-shadowed height
Musing, Asoka mingled with the night.
At last the moon sank o'er the forest wide.
Within his soul those fountains welled no more, 120
Yet breathed a balm still, fresh as fallen dew:
The mist coiled upward over Ganges shore;
And he arose and sighed,
And gathered his cloak round him, and anew
Threaded the deep woods to his palace door. 125

JOHN FREEMAN

THE CHAIR

THE chair was made
By hands long dead,
Polished by many bodies sitting there,
Until the wood-lines flowed as clean as waves.

Mine sat restless there, 5
Or popped to stare
Hugged the low kitchen with fond eyes
Or tired eyes that looked at nothing at all.

Or watched from the smoke rise
The flame's snake-eyes, 10
Up the black-bearded chimney leap;
Then on my shoulder my dull head would drop.

And half asleep
I heard her creep—
Her never-singing lips shut fast, 15
Fearing to wake me by a careless breath.

Then, at last,
My lids upcast,
Our eyes met, I smiled and she smiled,
And I shut mine again and truly slept. 20

Was I that child
Fretful, sick, wild?
Was that you moving soft and soft—
Between the rooms if I but played at sleep?

Or if I laughed, 25
 Talked, cried, or coughed,
 You smiled too, just perceptibly,
 Or your large kind brown eyes said, O poor boy!

From the fireside I
 Could see the narrow sky 30
 Through the barred heavy window panes,
 Could hear the sparrows quarrelling round the lilac:

And hear the heavy rains
 Choking in the roof-drains:—
 Else of the world I nothing heard 35
 Or nothing remember now. But most I loved

To watch when you stirred
 Busily like a bird
 At household doings; with hands floured
 Mixing a magic with your cakes and tarts. 40

O into me, sick, froward,
 Yourself you poured
 In all those days and weeks when I
 Sat, slept, woke, whimpered, wondered and slept again.

Now but a memory 45
 To bless and harry me
 Remains of you still swathed with care;
 Myself your chief care, sitting by the hearth.

Propped in the pillowed chair,
 Following you with tired stare, 50
 And my hands following the wood lines
 By dead hands smoothed and followed many years.

JAMES ELROY FLECKER
THE GOLDEN JOURNEY TO SAMARKAND
PROLOGUE

WE who with songs beguile your pilgrimage
And swear that Beauty lives though lilies die,
We Poets of the proud old lineage
Who sing to find your hearts, we know not why,—

What shall we tell you? Tales, marvellous tales 5
Of ships and stars and isles where good men rest,
Where nevermore the rose of sunset pales,
And winds and shadows fall toward the West :

And there the world's first huge white-bearded kings
In dim glades sleeping, murmur in their sleep, 10
And closer round their breasts the ivy clings,
Cutting its pathway slow and red and deep.

II

And how beguile you? Death has no repose
Warmer and deeper than that Orient sand
Which hides the beauty and bright faith of those 15
Who made the Golden Journey to Samarkand.

And now they wait and whiten peaceably,
Those conquerors, those poets, those so fair :
They know time comes, not only you and I,
But the whole world shall whiten, here or there; 20

When those long caravans that cross the plain
With dauntless feet and sound of silver bells

Put forth no more for glory or for gain,
Take no more solace from the palm-girt wells.

When the great markets by the sea shut fast
All that calm Sunday that goes on and on :
When even lovers find their peace at last,
And Earth is but a star, that once had shone.

25

BRUMANA

O H, shall I never, never be home again?
Meadows of England shining in the rain,
Spread wide your daisied lawns; your ramparts green
With briar fortify; with blossom screen
Till my far morning; and, O streams that slow, 5
And pure, and deep, through plains and playlands go,
For me your love and all your kingcups store;
And, dark militia of the southern shore,
Old fragrant friends, preserve me the last lines
Of that long saga which you sang me, pines, 10
When, lonely boy, beneath the chosen tree
I listened, with my eyes upon the sea.

O traitor pines, you sang what life has found
The fastest of fair tales.
Earth blew a far-horn prelude all around, 15
That native music of her forest home,
While, from the sea's blue fields and syren dales,
Shadows and light noon-spectres of the foam,
Riding the summer gales,
On aery viols plucked an idle sound. 20

Hearing you sing, O trees,
Hearing you murmur, "There are older seas,
That beat on vaster sands,
Where the wise snailfish move their pearly towers
To carven rocks and sculptured promont'ries." 25
Hearing you whisper, "Lands
Where blaze the unimaginable flowers."
Beneath me in the valley waves the palm,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Beneath, beyond the valley, breaks the sea;
 Beneath me sleep in mist and light and calm 30
 Cities of Lebanon, dream-shadow-dim,
 Where Kings of Tyre and Kings of Tyre did rule
 In ancient days in endless dynasty;
 And all around the snowy mountains swim
 Like mighty swans afloat in heaven's pool. 35

But I will walk upon the wooded hill
 Where stands a grove, O pines, of sister pines,
 And when the downy twilight droops her wing
 And no sea glimmers and no mountain shines
 My heart shall listen still. 40
 For pines are gossip pines the wide world through
 And full of runic tales to sigh or sing.
 'Tis ever sweet through pines to see the sky
 Mantling a deeper gold or darker blue.
 'Tis ever sweet to lie 45
 On the dry carpet of the needles brown,
 And though the fanciful green lizard stir
 And windy odours light as thistledown
 Breathe from the lavdanon and lavender,
 Half to forget the wandering and pain, 50
 Half to remember days that have gone by,
 And dream and dream that I am home again.

RUPERT BROOKE

THE GREAT LOVER

I HAVE been so great a lover : filled my days
So proudly with the splendour of Love's praise,
The pain, the calm, and the astonishment,
Desire illimitable, and still content,
And all dear names men use, to cheat despair, 5
For the perplexed and viewless streams that bear
Our hearts at random down the dark of life.
Now, ere the unthinking silence on that strife
Steals down, I would cheat drowsy Death so far,
My night shall be remembered for a star 10
That outshone all the suns of all men's days.
Shall I not crown them with immortal praise
Whom I have loved, who have given me, dared with
me
High secrets, and in darkness knelt to see
The inenarrable godhead of delight? 15
Love is a flame;—we have beaconed the world's night.
A city :—and we have built it, these and I.
An emperor :—we have taught the world to die.
So, for their sakes I loved, ere I go hence,
And the high cause of Love's magnificence, 20
And to keep loyalties young, I'll write those names
Golden for ever, eagles, crying flames,
And set them as a banner, that men may know,
To dare the generations, burn, and blow
Out on the winds of Time, shining and streaming..... 25
These I have loved :
White plates and cups, clean-gleaming,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Ringed with blue lines; and feathery, faery dust:
Wet roofs, beneath the lamp-light; the strong crust
Of friendly bread; and many-tasting food;
Rainbows; and the blue bitter smoke of wood; 30
And radiant raindrops couching in cool flowers;
And, flowers themselves, that sway through sunny
 hours,

Dreaming of moths that drink them under the moon :
Then, the cool kindness of sheets, that soon
Smooth away trouble; and the rough male kiss 35
Of blankets; grainy wood : live hair that is
Shining and free; blue-massing clouds; the keen
Unpassioned beauty of a great machine;
The benison of hot water; furs to touch;
The good smell of old clothes; and other such— 40
The comfortable smell of friendly fingers,
Hair's fragrance, and the musty reek that lingers
About dead leaves and last year's ferns.....

Dear names,
And thousand other throng to me! Royal flames;
Sweet water's dimpling laugh from tap or spring; 45
Holes in the ground; and voices that do sing;
Voices in laughter, too; and body's pain,
Soon turned to peace; and the deep-panting train;
Firm sands; the little dulling edge of foam
That browns and dwindles as the wave goes home; 50
And washen stones, gay for an hour; the cold
Graveness of iron; moist black earthen mould;
Sleep; and high places; footprints in the dew;
And oaks; and brown horse-chestnuts, glossy-new;
And new-peeled sticks; and shining pools on grass;— 55
All these have been my loves. And these shall pass,
Whatever passes not, in the great hour,
Nor all my passion, all my prayers, have power

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

To hold them with me through the gate of Death.
They'll play deserter, turn with the traitor breath, 60
Break the high bond we made, and sell Love's trust
And sacramental covenant to the dust.

—Oh, never a doubt but, somewhere, I shall wake,
And give what's left of love again, and make
New friends, now strangers.....

But the best I've known 65
Stays here, and changes, breaks, grows old, is blown
About the winds of the world, and fades from brains
Of living men, and dies.

Nothing remains.

O dear my loves, O faithless, once again
This one last gift I give: that after men 70
Shall know, and later lovers, far-removed,
Praise you, "All these were lovely"; say, "He loved."

THOMAS HARDY

THE DARKLING THRUSH

I LEANT upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky 5
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant, 10
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth 15
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited; 20
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carollings 25
Of such ecstatic sound

Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or night around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

30

IN TIME OF "THE BREAKING OF NATIONS"

I

ONLY a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

II

Only thin smoke without flame 5
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

III

Yonder a maid and her wight 10
Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die.

JULIAN GREN-FELL

INTO BATTLE

THE naked earth is warm with Spring,
And with green grass and bursting trees
Leans to the sun's gaze glorying,
And quivers in the sunny breeze;

And Life is Colour and Warmth and Light, 5
And a striving evermore for these;
And he is dead who will not fight;
And who dies fighting has increase.

The fighting man shall from the sun
Take warmth, and life from the glowing earth; 10
Speed with the light-foot winds to run,
And with the trees to newer birth;
And find, when fighting shall be done,
Great rest, and fullness after dearth.

All the bright company of Heaven 15
Hold him in their high comradeship,
The Dog-Star, and the Sisters Seven,
Orion's Belt and sworded hip.

The woodland trees that stand together,
They stand to him each one a friend; 20
They gently speak in the windy weather;
They guide to valley and ridge's end.

The kestrel hovering by day,
And the little owls that call by night,

Bid him be swift and keen as they, 25
 As keen of ear, as swift of sight.

The blackbird sings to him, "Brother, brother,
 If this be the last song you shall sing,
 Sing well, for you may not sing another;
 Brother, sing." 30

In dreary doubtful waiting hours,
 Before the brazen frenzy starts,
 The horses show him nobler powers;
 O patient eyes, courageous hearts!

And when the burning moment breaks, 35
 And all things else are out of mind,
 And only Joy of Battle takes
 Him by the throat, and makes him blind,

Through joy and blindness he shall know,
 Not caring much to know, that still 40
 Nor lead nor steel shall reach him, so
 That it be not the Destined Will.

The thundering line of battle stands,
 And in the air Death moans and sings;
 But Day shall clasp him with strong hands, 45
 And Night shall fold him in soft wings.

SYLVIA LYND

THE RETURN OF THE GOLDFINCHES

WE are much honoured by your choice,
O golden birds of silver voice!
That in our garden you should find
A pleasure to your mind—

The painted pear of all our trees, 5
The south slope towards the gooseberries
Where all day long the sun is warm—
Combining use with charm.

Did the pink tulips take your eye?
Or Beach's barn secure and high 10
To guard you from some chance mishap
Of gales through Shoreham gap?

First you were spied a flighting pair
Flashing and fluting here and there,
Until in stealth the nest was made 15
And graciously you stayed.

Now when I pause beneath your tree,
An anxious head peeps down at me,
A crimson jewel in its crown,
I looking up, you down :— 20

I wonder if my stripey shawl
Seems pleasant in your eyes at all,
I can assure you that your wings
Are most delightful things.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Sweet birds, I pray, be not severe, 25
Do not deplore our presence here,
We cannot all be goldfinches
In such a world as this.

The shaded lawn, the bordered flowers,
We'll call them yours instead of ours, 30
The pinks and the acacia tree
Shall own your sovereignty.

And, if you let us, we will prove
Our lovely and obsequious love,
And when your little grey-pates hatch 35
We'll help you to keep watch.

No prowling stranger cats shall come
About your high celestial home,
With dangerous sounds we'll chase them hence
And ask no recompense. 40

And he, the Ethiop of our house,
Slayer of beetle and of mouse,
Huge, lazy, fond, whom we love well—
Peter shall wear a bell.

Believe me, birds, you need not fear, 45
No cages or limed twigs are here,
We only ask to live with you
In this green garden, too.

And when in other shining summers
Our place is taken by new-comers, 50
We'll leave them with the house and hill
The goldfinches' good will.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Your dainty flights, your painted coats,
The silver mist that is your notes,
And all your sweet caressing ways
Shall decorate their days. 55

And never will the thought of spring
Visit our minds, but a gold wing
Will flash among the green and blue,
And we'll remember you. 60

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

And hafts of turquoise-studded jade, and phials rich
with scented drugs, 15
Koràns inscribed on ass's skin, and bales of silk from
Temesvár,
And silver ear-rings beaten thin, and bargains from the
cool bazaar.
He felt the gold already pouched, he crooned to it with
horrid love,
As still the camels onward slouched with hatred of
the men that drove.
For thirty days the caravan trailed on behind the
merchant's foal, 20
Through Persia and through Turkestan, the city of
Irkutsk their goal;
They passed the fruitful hill-girt lands where dwelt
the fair-skinned Grecian race,
And came into the wilder place, and sighted vagrant
Cossack bands
That wandered with their flocks and herds, and
trafficked with the train of Kurds;
They stirred the ghost of Tamerlane, who swept that
way with Tartar hordes, 25
The ghosts of dead barbarian lords, the Asiatic
hurricane;
They crossed the mighty road that runs from Moscow
through to China's wall,
And trod the path of nomad Huns and knew Siberia's
white pall
When fields of Persian asphodel were visions of a
distant day
And boundless snow around them lay, and noiseless
snow for ever fell, 30
Where soon the fleeting day was done, and on the
hard horizon low

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

They saw the scarlet ball of sun divided by the ridge
of snow
Sink down in skies incarnadine; and still with their
disjointed gait
And nursing their malignant hate, the camels kept
unbroken line.
When yet a hundred miles or more stretched out
between them and their goal 35
The merchant riding on before drew rein on his
Circassian foal
And called a halt with lifted hand as he had done
unfailingly
Each night since the monotony began with that
unvaried land.
The dusk was suddenly alive as shouting voices passed
the word,
And all the drowsy train stirred with movement like a
shaken hive. 40
The master merchant stiff from cramp was calling for
his saddle flask,
As each to his accustomed task ran swiftly in the
growing camp.
A tent like an inverted bell, vermilion with the dyes of
Tyre,
Was lifted rapidly and well, and like a torch the
kindled fire
Destroyed the night with leaping tongue, and in a
circle round the glow 45
Men shovelled back the melting snow, and skins and
Khelim rugs were flung—
And unforgotten were the needs of water-bullocks
standing by
Whose brows are stained with orange dye, whose horns
are looped with turquoise beads.

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

I know the lovely Lake of Van;
 Yet, knowing all these things,
 I wander with a caravan,
 I wander with a caravan !

The cold moon rose remotely higher, insensibly the
 voices hushed, 75
 And men with wine and laughter flushed were sleeping
 all around the fire,
 Till one alone sat on erect, his ready gun across his
 knees,
 The sentry of the night elect, guardian of sleeping
 destinies.
 The water-bullocks lay as dead; the dogs drew near
 with noiseless tread,
 And huddled in a loose-limbed heap beside the fire, and
 through their sleep 80
 They twitched at some remembered hunt; the merchant
 in his sheepskin rolled
 Within the tent saw dreams of gold; the camels with
 uneasy grunt
 And quake of their distorted backs slept on with loath-
 ing by their packs.
 At dawn the weary sentry rose to throw some brush-
 wood on the flames,
 Called on his comrades by their names, and turned to
 greet the endless snows, 85
 But then from his astonished lips a cry of unbelieving
 rang
 And all the men towards him sprang, the camel drivers
 with their whips,
 The bullock driver with his yoke, and gazed in loud
 bewilderment

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Till slowly in his fur-lined cloak the merchant issued
from his tent.

Then he too started at the sight and clamoured with
his clamorous men, 90
And swore he could not see aright, and rubbed his
eyes and stared again;

The camels came with lurching tread and stood in loose
 With neck outstretched and swaying head and mouth
 And drew from some unclean recess within their body's

A bladder smeared with filthiness that bubbled on the morning air. 95

For there, upon the shining plain a city radiantly lay,
Coloured against the rising day, amid the snow a jewelled stain.

And in her walls a spacious gate gave entrance to a
varied stream
Of folk that went incorporate like figures in a silent
dream.

And high above the roofs arose, more coloured for the
hueless snows. 100

The domes of churches, bronze and green, like peacocks
in their painted sheen.

The merchant, with a trembling handⁱ extended far,
 extended wide
Against illusion's fairyland, at length articulately
 cried :

"Irkutsk ! but twice a hundred miles remained of weary pilgrimage

Before we hoped with happy smiles to reach our final anchorage. 105

But look again. That rosy tower that rises like a tulip
straight
Within the walls beside the gate, a balanced plume, a
springing flower,
And pointed with a lance-like spire of bronze, was
fifty years ago
—A boy, I saw it standing so,—demolished and
destroyed by fire.”

And one, a venerable Kurd, took up again the fallen
word : 110
"I travelled both as boy and man between Irkutsk and
Kurdistan,
But never since my beard was grown saw I that inn
beside the way
Wherewith the Council made away, full fifty counted
years aflow'n."
They gazed upon the marvel long, the spectre city
wonderful,
Until the youth who made the song cried out, "We
grow too fanciful. 115
Irkutsk with roofs of coloured tiles lies distant twice
a hundred miles.
And this, a city of the shades, a rainbow of the echoing
air
As fair as false, and false as fair, already into nothing
fades."
And like a bubble, like the mist that in the valley
faintly swirls,
Like orient sheen on sulky-pearls, like hills remotely
amethyst, 120
Like colours on Phœnician glass, like plumage on the
fisher's wing,

SELECTIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

Like music on the breath of spring, they saw the vision
 lift and pass,
 Till only white unbroken snow stretched out before
 the caravan,
 And the bewildered heart of man truth from delusion
 could not know.
 But all the long laborious train moved slowly on its
 course again 125
 Across the snow unbroken, white, and nursing each
 his private creed,
 The merchant his illusive greed, the camels their
 illusive spite.

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